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HER WASHINGTON SEASON

HER WASHINGTON SEASON

BY

JEANIE GOULD LINCOLN
AUTHOR OF "MARJORIE'S QUEST," ETC.

"Woe is me that I am constrained to dwell among the tents of Kedar!"

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Dedicated

TO

MRS. B. OGLE TAYLOE

WITH THE AFFECTION OF AN HEREDITARY FRIENDSHIP.

PREFACE.

It is with much modesty that the writer sends forth the following story of Washington resident social life. On its behalf, she simply desires to say that it would ill become her to forget the warm hearts and kindly hands that have been extended to a stranger in their midst, and to give to that outer world which has received so many unpleasant and overdrawn pictures of so-called "Washington society" the other side of the mirror with the fidelity of truth, as well as the kindly criticism that, looking beneath the rose, finds much to praise and admire.

WASHINGTON, D. C.

January, 1884.

HER WASHINGTON SEASON.

LETTER No. I.

From Miss Dolly Oglethorpe, in Washington, to Miss Laura De Peyster, in London.

1700 K Street, January 3.

My dear Laura,

It certainly seems as if Fate itself has been against me in the matter of correspondence for the past three weeks; but, indeed, there is such a general uprooting of all my plans that I am almost bewildered, and it is odd enough to find myself installed in Aunt Oglethorpe's stately house for the winter, instead of being in the dear, dingy, cosey apartments in Albemarle Street, Piccadilly. I have hardly grown used to the change from New York here. It is just the commencement of the Washington season,

and we have been going out incessantly ever since New Year's day; but I think after I become reconciled to the "situation" I shall be able to resume my good habits, and will try at least to write you with my usual regularity.

I trust you got my last; and what a scrawl it was! — written the day Harry sailed. To you and to Aunt Jem (who alone know the unhappy state of affairs) I can relieve my feelings by abusing — what? I was about to say, Harry; but when I think a moment I might as well revile Uncle Oglethorpe's will, Barbara's pride, and Harry's utterly doltish blindness. If you could have seen them that day at the hotel! I was an object of pity, I assure you, among them all. Barbara was like a marble statue, going whither she was told, standing where she was bidden; I absolutely had to thrust the prayer-book into her hand, and she never knew whether it was open at the Baptismal or the Marriage Service. Beyond the fact of an assent in the proper place, her share of the ceremony was inaudible, though I'll do

Harry the justice to state that his responses were said boldly and clearly.

Oh, Laura, dear, what a wedding! Just think of our beautiful Barbara without a bridesmaid (or even a wedding-dress, — she wore that simple white surah tea-gown, which you remember came from Marguerite's when we were in Genoa); it was enough to make one tear one's hair for vexation. And Aunt Mary wept a gentle *adagio* accompaniment to each word the clergyman uttered, while poor dear Aunt Jem looked like a grenadier, — stiff and stern as those of the great Frederick, — just to keep herself from doing likewise. What a horrid old world it is, Laura! and would anybody ever imagine that I, Dolly Oglethorpe, am forced to be in the very centre of all this worry and mystery just because I dote on Barbara, and because she needs me, poor dear! as a kind of escape-valve for the winter? No consideration on earth would keep me this side the Atlantic, were it not for that, as you know perfectly well.

However, having come to Washington in the cause of philanthropy, I propose to enjoy myself

as much as I can. Having had but one winter in New York, I am by no means tired of society *as yet*, though what I may become after a month or two of this whirl, I am incapable of asserting. And this reminds me that I must give you some idea of our surroundings; there is nothing whatever to be said against *them*, at all events.

You may remember that I have never seen my great-aunt, Madam Oglethorpe, since I was a very small child, and that this is my first visit to her and to Washington. Barbara and I travelled on by a train they call the "Limited" (which is precisely like the fast express to Scotland, with Pullman cars), bringing Barbara's maid, Saltus, with us, and being escorted by Grymes, Aunt Oglethorpe's major-domo, an ancient colored retainer, of most Chesterfieldian manners. We came two days before New Year; and I must confess that as we rolled up Pennsylvania Avenue in aunt's roomy carriage, with the brightest of sunshine falling over the marble dome of the Capitol, the wide streets, the delightful pavement (just like dear Paris, you know, since a dreadful "Boss" Somebody took the city in hand and

improved it, despite the howling and groans of an ungrateful country), the gayly dressed people on the streets, and a general air of nobody being in a hurry, — all this tended to give me a sense of *bien-être* and comfort which I had been far from expecting in our exile. After quite a drive the carriage stopped before the door of a large gray house, rather old-fashioned in exterior, but with a look about it which attracted both Barbara and me. The door was opened by Grymes's double (I have since ascertained that Chesterfield No. 2 is a brother of that invaluable servant), and we were ushered up the wide staircase into a small parlor at the left, where stood Aunt Oglethorpe herself.

Laura, I fell absolutely dead in love with her on the spot! I wish any words of mine could describe to you adequately the lovely, benign face, the exquisite, courtly manners, the gentleness and charm of her whole presence. She is like a fairy godmother in height, and yet her dignified repose compels you to imagine her tall. She always wears, at dinner, a black velvet gown, with a long sweeping train, a dainty

bit of old lace around her throat, fastened by a diamond pin, and on her head a plain, straight widow's cap, of a bygone fashion, which seems just the touch needed to complete her picturesqueness. Her hands, which are marvels of beauty, even at her somewhat advanced age, are covered with beautiful rings, which I understand she wears because they were gifts from Uncle Oglethorpe, to whom she was devotedly attached, and of whom she can hardly speak, even now, without emotion.

Imagine this beautiful old lady standing in a parlor where fine old paintings, china that would drive a connoisseur wild with envy, and rare trifles from all over the world, are strewn broadcast.

"My dears," she said, in her clear, distinctly accentuated voice, "you are very welcome. I am more than glad to feel that you are come as members of my household to the old Oglethorpe home."

Barbara, who had been absolutely frozen all day, in one of her most unhappy moods, burst into tears. "Dear, dearest aunt," she said, kiss-

ing her fondly, "if I had known *you*, I think I should not have dreaded to come."

This did not strike me as being the most felicitous of beginnings; so I interposed rather hastily: "I don't suppose you know which it is, Aunt Oglethorpe, as you have n't seen either of us since childhood; but this weeping young woman is Barbara, and I am Dorothy, ordinarily styled Dolly. We have been inseparable ever since Aunt Jem took us to Europe three years ago; and if you had n't asked us *both* to visit you, I am sure that Barbara's tears would be falling rather more rapidly than they are at this moment." And I gave Barbara a most annihilating and admonitory glance.

However, Aunt Oglethorpe seemed to understand, for she only smiled gently, and went on conversing about matters in general until Barbara recovered her usual calmness.

The next day, Laura, we spent in resting ourselves and getting acquainted with this marvellous house. I don't believe there is another like it in the city; Aunt Oglethorpe and the house both are *sui generis*. Grandpapa Oglethorpe

built it when Washington was first made the seat of Government, and he, you remember, was a Senator from Georgia, of the First Congress. Of course we Oglethorpes are all awfully proud of it; and Aunt Oglethorpe keeps up all its traditions, I assure you, for she is a veritable queen in society here. Her *salon* is the resort of young and old alike; the older people come to renew their youth, the younger ones to have the *entrée* as a privilege, — *all* to admire and love the dear aunt. Every evening at eight, aunt makes tea in the little parlor; the whole suite of rooms is lighted with softly shaded wax lights, and we receive until ten, and then off to balls and receptions until twelve or one. I find that very few people stay late in Washington, unless at a german; for one goes so much, day and night, that rest becomes imperative, and bed most comfortable after midnight.

Aunt Oglethorpe never goes to balls, and very rarely to dinners; so the day after our arrival she told us she had provided a chaperon for us who would enjoy nothing better than taking us about.

I was on the point of asking all manner of questions, being somewhat curious as to the order of chaperon that is *en règle* here, when Grymes brought up a card, and aunt said, smiling, —

"The very person, Dolly. Mrs. Bellair is in the drawing-room; and as I must finish a letter before going down, will you or Barbara receive her?"

Barbara gave me an imploring look; so I sprang up and ran out of the room in a fashion that I know must have amused Aunt Oglethorpe, for I can see that Barbara's stately calm is much more to aunt's taste than my little jumps and frisks, — *do* you remember how Arthur Harcourt used to tease me about that?

To return: I followed Grymes down; and as I entered the door of the drawing-room I saw a dainty figure rise to meet me, holding by the hand a little boy, — the two forming the prettiest group imaginable. I had rather expected some dowager with gray puffs; instead, I found a wonderfully bright, pretty young woman, who greeted me with much cordiality.

"Is this Mrs. Oglethorpe?" she said, with a puzzled look. "No? Ah, then you are the one they call Dolly. And how glad I am to see you! I hope you come prepared to think Washington quite the nicest, most delightful city on the globe, for you know we residents are dreadfully proud of it, and delight to make you Northerners acknowledge its fascinations. — Donny," to the boy at her hand, "tell Miss Oglethorpe that we've been talking of her and her cousin for days, and welcome her to Washington."

Whereupon Donny, who has a most angelic and innocent face, and who possesses behind it a perfect imp of mischief, raised his beautiful dark eyes, slid his hand in mine, and said in a soft voice, "Mamma, I think I'd like to kiss her; she's *almost* as pretty as you are!"

That remark of Donny's set us both off into shouts of laughter, and this is the way that Kitty Bellair and I got acquainted, for we are great friends already. It seemed absurd for Barbara and me to call her Mrs. Bellair (she is some remote and very distant connection of the Oglethorpes, just enough to claim her for cousin-

ship); so we call her Kitty, as aunt does. And she is after my own heart, Laura, — gay, bright, and, oh! *so* clever, with the most affable, charming manners. By the way, do you know that seems a characteristic of most of the married women here; they certainly say the pleasantest possible things in the pleasantest possible way, from what looks like a desire to make every one enjoy herself.

True, it may be a species of subtle flattery; but I am inclined to believe in its sincerity, for the motive is kindness, after all, and you can't think how "fetching" the *soupçon* of Southern cordiality is. For one thing, everybody always shakes hands; imagine how odd it seems to have a man shake hands with you in a ballroom, on an introduction! I could not get accustomed to it at first, and Kitty Bellair quite teased me about my "stiff little New York bow;" but now Barbara and I have concluded that we rather like it. Am I not adapting myself to circumstances most beautifully?

This letter is already very long, but I must just add that Kitty's husband holds quite a

high official position, and that under her wing we shall see the very best of circles here. We go to-night with her to a reception at the Secretary of State's, — a small affair, however, where the invitations are verbal, — and I will write you all about it in my next. I am quite wild for a first glimpse of all the dignitaries. I don't know whether Barbara will go or not, but I shall try by every possible means to make her do so, as I see no earthly need of her burying herself because Harry is away, after the style and manner of his leaving.

Don't forget me, my dearest Laura, but write often, and keep a very large corner in your heart for

Your always attached

DOLLY.

LETTER No. II.

From Mrs. Harry Fitzhugh Oglethorpe, in Washington, to Miss Katrine Suydam, in New York.

1700 K STREET, JANUARY 6.

MY DEAR KATRINE,

I KNOW that you are reproaching me for my singular silence. After the letter just received from you I cannot doubt your affection, and I will confide to you the peculiar and painful position in which I find myself placed.

You say that you saw the notice of my marriage in the "Times," and, save the bare fact, have heard no particulars. I suppose people are wondering and speculating about it; it is enough for you to say to the general public that urgent business matters took Harry to Egypt, and that, as I did not care to accompany him and travel rapidly, I am spending a very gay winter in Washington, under my grand-aunt Madam Oglethorpe's chaperonage.

That sounds well, does it not, Katrine? Would you think my heart is aching harder than it ever ached in my life, and sometimes I feel as cold, and nearly as hard, as a stone?

You are aware that when a very little child I lost both my parents, and that papa's will placed me under Aunt Jem's care until I came of age. At that date Mr. Carter, the gentleman who drew up papa's will, and who had been for years his confidential lawyer, placed in my hands, among other papers, a letter which my father had desired to have given me when I attained my twenty-first birthday.

Of course, I have always known (and you must have heard by common report) that the large Oglethorpe fortune was bequeathed jointly to me and to Harry Oglethorpe, the son of my father's half-brother, upon condition that we married. According to the wording of the will, should *I* decline to marry Harry, I receive my half of the fortune, but he loses his, and it goes to the collateral branches of my mother's family. Harry, as you perceive, has no option in the matter,— a proceeding which I have always thought

singularly unjust, but papa's private letter explains this.

Grandpapa Oglethorpe had but two sons,—my uncle James, Harry's father, the son of his first wife; and papa. It seems that the bulk of the fortune came to grandpapa through his second wife, my grandmother, and of course it was but just that my father should inherit it. Uncle James and his father, however, had been upon ill terms for years before grandpapa's death. He left his father's house at an early age, married (in direct defiance of grandpapa's wishes) the daughter of a gentleman with whom his father had a political quarrel of years' standing and of unusual bitterness, and, to crown his imprudence, invested all his small competency in a Northern bank which failed and left him nearly penniless. Poor uncle James! he did not long survive his misfortunes, for both he and his wife died in New Orleans of yellow fever (the same year that grandpapa died), leaving Harry to the care of his uncle in Washington, the husband of Madam Oglethorpe in whose home I am now residing.

Papa tells me in the letter which Mr. Carter gave me that he has endeavored to unite the fortune in Harry and me, thereby repairing what he considers grandpapa's harshness to Uncle James, and at the same time charges me (unless for some grave cause) not to refuse the principal condition of the will. Was not this rather a responsibility for a girl like me? I sometimes felt like rebelling against it, and should perhaps have done so but for that traitress in the citadel, — my heart!

Harry and I, as you know, were brought up with the idea firmly implanted in our minds that we were destined to marry each other; but Aunt Jem on the one side, and Aunt Oglethorpe on the other, with singular discretion, kept us apart, except for an occasional meeting, until I was eighteen and Harry twenty-two. You remember our meeting then, in New York? From that moment, Katrine, I have loved Harry devotedly, purely, — as a woman loves but once, I believe, in a lifetime, — and he is, and always has been, utterly and totally indifferent toward me.

Knowing this, you will ask why I married him. Alas! my poor, generous Harry has inherited from his father his reckless ways as well as his handsome face, winning manners, and warm, impulsive heart. His pecuniary embarrassments are well known to me, and I gained positive information in regard to them through Mr. Carter before I consented, six months ago (on my return from Europe), to fulfil the contract of my father's will. At that time Harry, for the first, showed me great kindliness; it was, to be sure, as I was quick to feel, strongly imbued with the *obligation* of the will, but he has so generous a heart that he could not be less than kind to a woman whom he viewed in the possible light of making his wife. And I loved him, Katrine; could I not hope to inspire him with the same affection by constant and unvarying devotion after our marriage?

Is there anything more subtly clever in human nature than the way we women contrive to deceive ourselves? And is it because man desires *only* the unattainable that what comes to him without a struggle is never valued in proportion?

The knowledge is slowly but surely forcing itself upon me that I had better have allowed Harry to go and work for his daily bread, alone, than to have handicapped him at the beginning of life by thrusting myself upon him with a princely fortune in my hand.

I cannot tell what raised a barrier between us. I only know that his letters became brief and cold, and that, after asking that our wedding should be of the most quiet nature (to which I acceded readily), he anticipated the date by a month, came on to New York, and we were married. Directly after the ceremony he told me, briefly and coldly, that he had, at last, a fine business opening connected with trade in Egypt, and that his passage was taken for the next day to Alexandria and Cairo, *via* England.

"But, Harry!" I gasped, "why should you make business arrangements *now?*" and then I could have bitten my tongue out when I saw the look that came over his face.

"If you mean that I should play the fine gentleman and live upon what ought to be *your* fortune, you are much mistaken," he said, oh!

so bitterly. "During the process of making myself a competency I shall live in a way that I cannot ask you to think of sharing, accustomed as you are to all that wealth can give you. I have already arranged with Aunt Oglethorpe to receive you at her home in Washington, and I desire you to remain under her charge until I return, or advise you further."

Then, Katrine, my temper rose. Was I a baby, to be treated as if I were "naughty"? "Advise!" I echoed scornfully; "why do you not say 'order' at once? It strikes me that you are appropriating one clause of the just uttered marriage service more speedily than any Benedict I ever heard of."

He turned quite pale, started to speak, and then, regaining his composure, said coldly: "As you please. I prefer that *my wife* should be with her whom I look upon as a mother. And in Washington, you know, you can see and enjoy, to the utmost, the social life of which you are so fond."

Sick at heart, I walked away from him; why should I answer a sneer that I utterly failed to

understand? I do not remember much of the scene that followed. Harry was deaf to Aunt Jem's entreaties, and Aunt Mary's tears flowed in vain; even Dolly, dear hot-headed, warm-hearted Dolly, descended upon him like a tempest, and gave him a taste of the true Oglethorpe temper in what she called "a plain setting-down." He had determined, and I was far too proud to ask him to change his plan one iota. He left me with a frigid kiss, on that my wedding-day, to feel myself an insulted bride, a deserted wife, and the most cruelly misunderstood of women.

I cannot tell you how I have suffered. I do not think, even yet, that I quite realize the full bitterness of it. I never loathed and dreaded anything so much as this coming to Washington. There again has Harry been cruel to me. Girl-like, I had really looked forward to paying Aunt Oglethorpe a visit, and fully expected that Harry would bring me here on our wedding-journey. I *do* like society, — not, perhaps, in the enthusiastic fashion that makes Dolly enjoy everything so intensely; but I like the friction as it were of one bright mind against another,

the repartee and the polished wit of our best talkers, be they men or women. I think these are found in greater numbers at the Capital than elsewhere; for the resident circle is, Aunt Oglethorpe tells me, "made up of every creature's best," from all sections of the country,—a circle where the "political element" (of which we hear so much from outsiders) is not considered as a passport to favor, except the politician bears some other claim to social consideration than that of mere politics.

I had looked forward to a Washington winter, Katrine, and now, like so many of our gratified desires, it turns to bitterness on my lips. I cannot seem to shake off the lethargy that clogs not only my heart, but almost my tongue. This is not the Barbara Oglethorpe that you know, but a cold, calm woman, who is conscious of her indifference and has no wish to conceal it. There is just one tender spot left me, thank God; and that is my love for, and my trust in Dolly. For her I am willing to go out; it pains her so much when I refuse. And yet the whole cry of my soul, in days that are one whirl of social engage-

ments, in nights that are often sleepless and spent in tears, — the cry of my overburdened woman's heart is that of the tortured Psalmist of old: "Woe is me that I am *constrained* to dwell among the tents of Kedar!" The tents would have been preferable: there, at least, one could have solitude; here the voices of my own kind nearly drive me mad.

Dearest Katrine, I am writing you a volume instead of an ordinary letter; but if you could but know the relief it is to pour it all out, even on this blank paper, you would forgive me the unconscious egotism. Write me often; I need your firm friendship as an anchor.

I cannot close my already long letter without telling you (what the retrospect of my own sorrow has caused me to forget to mention) of the surprise and revelation, almost, that dear Aunt Oglethorpe was to me. She is thoroughly and altogether charming. Her kindness of heart, cultivation, and exquisite manners, that have the elegance and grace of a bygone time and the aroma of a court, together with her marvellous skill as a *raconteuse*, fill me with admiration;

while her kindly way of seeing the *best* that is in every human being who comes under her magical sway, almost reconciles me to my enforced residence in Washington. We have not yet mentioned Harry, except in the most casual way; she has sufficient insight, as far as her own sex is concerned, to feel (if she does not know) that there is something abnormal in our relations. But she has too much tact to seem to perceive it, as well as that fine sense of breeding which avoids curiosity and forbids a liberty even with one's closest friends or relatives.

Adieu, dear, dearest Katrine. Think of me often, and pity while you console.

Devotedly yours,

BARBARA OGLETHORPE.

LETTER No. III.

From Miss Dolly Oglethorpe, in Washington, to Miss Laura De Peyster, in London.

1700 K STREET, JANUARY 8.

MY DEAR LAURA,

YOUR letter, written between Christmas and New Year's, came this morning, and you know how glad I was to see it. My last letter has crossed yours; never mind, I will take up the thread where I laid it down, for I feel as if my letters to you are really almost like a diary. I want you to have as good an idea as possible of what we are saying and doing here; tell me in your next whether I am successful.

I must put on my thinking cap and try to remember what I have done since my last, for we do so much that I sometimes appeal to Barbara to straighten out my memory. But I have not told you of my evening at the Secretary's, and that was really charming.

Kitty Bellair came for Barbara and me about ten o'clock that evening; she had been dining at the Executive Mansion, and could not leave earlier, of course. But we were quite in time at the Secretary's; for the parlors were pleasantly full, not crowded, when we entered them. Kitty tells me that these informal receptions rarely *are* crowded, the object being to avoid a crowd such as used to prevail in former days. She says that the custom of giving these small receptions was inaugurated by the wife of one of our former Secretaries; she was in mourning the first winter they were here, and large parties or card receptions being out of the question, not wishing to close the house entirely, she began giving informal verbal invitations for Saturday evenings, usually extending them in person, in her kindly, sweet manner, which made each guest whom she invited feel it a pleasure to accept. The Diplomatic Corps was always asked; outside of that body, only those of her acquaintances whom she chose to select. And now it has rather become a custom, and the evenings at the Secretary's have been taken as a precedent by a number of

ladies who are prominent in society here; and I find these receptions about as agreeable as anything can be.

To return to this especial one: Jack Bellair was with us; so he took Barbara down, and I followed with Kitty. As usual, the servant stood ready to announce us; but Jack made him a signal not to do so, so we slipped inside the door quietly;—as a rule, I don't think Americans like having their names float ahead of them into a drawing-room. We were received most cordially by the Secretary and his wife, who stood at the left hand as we entered; and after a few words with each of them, Kitty and I passed on to greet one of the young ladies of the house, leaving Jack to wander off with Barbara. Of course, I was as keen as possible to know "who was who" in an assemblage where nearly every man and woman was a person of note: so Kitty ensconced herself just at the folding-door between the rooms, and in the most good-natured manner enlightened my ignorance.

The first group that attracted my gaze was that of the Chinese Minister and suite. There

they stood, Laura, those almond-eyed Celestials, in the dress of their nation,—gorgeous brocades and silken fabrics, glittering with gold threads,—their queer little caps on their heads, their hands thrust into their wide sleeves, regarding those around them with the grave dignity of an Oriental. The Minister stood with his interpreter at his right, and presently Kitty brought me up to be presented to him. He speaks very little English, so our conversation consisted chiefly of smiles and bows; but one of the Secretaries of the Legation I found very agreeable, and he speaks our language extremely well. After a few moments' chat, however, Kitty and I moved on, as some one else came up, and I seized her and pinned her against the sofa.

"You sha'n't stir another inch," whispered I, "until you tell me who some of these people are. I want to know *before* I meet them; please, Kitty, be good."

"Very well," said she, with a laugh, "your insatiate curiosity must be gratified. Do you see that tall, blond-bearded man, leaning against the mantel? That is the distinguished successor

of the late Professor Henry, the Secretary of the Smithsonian, and the head of the American Fisheries; and the silver-haired gentleman with whom he is exchanging some jest is none other than our famous historian, Mr. Bancroft. I'll present them both to you presently. You are not like most young girls, Dolly, I'm glad to say, for you have sense enough to appreciate older men: do you know, it's rather a theory of mine that hardly any of them *are* worth talking to until they attain a few gray hairs."

"Kitty," said I, "stop theorizing when you are at a party, and don't turn my giddy brain with compliments, but just tell me who is the lady in ruby velvet, with the crowd of gentlemen around her? What a charming, animated face, and how easily she is entertaining all those men!"

"Ah! there you touch me," said Kitty; "that woman is one of my admirations. I do have such occasionally. You have laid your hand at once upon one of the most brilliant and popular women in Washington; she is the wife of an ex-cabinet minister. Witty without malice, bril-

liant without effort, she is almost equally fascinating to women as men; and the latter, my dear, flock about her like bees wherever she shows herself. She is a warm friend, and I fancy has more heart than brilliant women are credited with. Do you see the lady next her, the one presiding at the tea-table? That is Miss Endicott; put those two women opposite each other at a dinner, Dolly, and to hear them talk is one of the things that would take one back to the days of Madame de Staël."

"Then mind you ask me to dine with them some day," said I. "Kitty, I like your Miss Endicott. Did you see her just now move aside to make a place for that elderly lady? I am sure she said something graceful, for see how the old lady is beaming upon her."

"No doubt," said Kitty, warmly. "Miss Endicott is nothing if not kindly. I have an intimate friend who knows her well behind the scenes, and who assures me that there is nothing about *her* which is not genuine. She generally has a pet project on foot to benefit somebody, and that project is sure to be carried out, even

if she has to appeal to the Cabinet, nay, the President himself, to achieve success. *Apropos*, I heard a very comical story about her in this regard, several years ago. One morning she was told that a person wished to see her, and upon going to her reception-room she found a man awaiting her, who bowed respectfully and proceeded to state his errand. 'Knowing, madam,' said he, 'that you were a kind lady and had influence, I came to ask you to assist me in procuring a position under Government.' Miss Endicott asked him what the position was, and what reason he could assign for its being given him. 'What I want,' said he, with entire gravity, 'is a place as messenger in any one of the Departments; and I have a claim upon this Administration because my wife's sister *embroidered white skirts for Miss Nelly Grant when she got married.*' Miss Endicott kept her countenance and dismissed the applicant politely, and forgot all about it until an evening some weeks after when she happened to be dining with the President. It was a small dinner given for a Boston celebrity, and during the dinner this

gentleman, who sat next Miss Endicott, laughingly remarked to her, glancing around the table as he spoke, 'I fancy that you and I are the only guests present who have no political aspirations; in short, we have n't a gift to ask of the President.' 'Ah! there you mistake,' she said readily, '*I have!*' and turning to the President she then and there repeated, in the drollest manner, the story I have just told you, convulsing the guests and ending by receiving General Grant's assurance that her visitor should have the place he coveted. I only wish, Dolly, that I could have heard her tell that story, for she has the quaintest, drollest way of expressing herself; and then she does n't ape originality: it's there, and consequently must rise to the surface."

"Upon my word, Kitty," said I, "you are the most generous little woman alive. How warmly you praise, and without a taint of envy!"

"Envy?" echoed Kitty, with a peal of laughter. "And pray, what should I be envious of? It's all a mistake to fancy that we women do not admire each other; we do intensely, only

sometimes we dare not say so, for fear of being accused of 'gush.' My mission in life is to be appreciative; you see I endeavor to fulfil it."

At this moment a dark-browed, heavily bearded man approached Kitty with a pleased "Bon soir, madame," and in a moment I found myself talking to the Turkish Minister, Mr. Aristarchi Bey. He is very popular, Kitty tells me, and I found him very pleasant. He was good enough to enlighten me as to the names of some of the guests, and pointed out the Chief Justice, four of the Judges of the Supreme Court, and the different foreign ministers who were present. By that time Kitty had come back to my side bringing with her a gentleman whom she presented to me as Mr. Fairfax.

I don't think that I was as much struck with his appearance when I first saw him, Laura, as I have been every time I have met Alan Fairfax since. I glanced at him, and noticed that he was very tall, had an air of elegance and fine hazel eyes; beyond that I had not progressed when he offered me his arm, and took me through the hall into the library, where he

provided me with an ice, and rolled up an easy-chair, which he gave me. The first remark he made placed us almost upon a friendly footing at once, for he said, —

"Miss Oglethorpe, I think I am not mistaken in supposing you to be the lady of whom I have often heard from my old friend, Arthur Harcourt."

Was n't it funny, Laura? Do you recollect Arthur's American *fidus Achates*, whose various perfections he was always dilating upon? This is the man, and I told him I felt as if I had known all about him for years.

"Don't," said he, with a comical expression of dismay. "I shiver in anticipation of the disappointment you are about to encounter if you happen to remember anything that Harcourt ever said of me. 'Save me from my friends' is a literal precept in his case, because he is totally blind to any imperfections in those mortals whom he honors with his regard. And it *is* an honor, dear old fellow!" added Mr. Fairfax, with a laugh whose frankness made me like him at once.

"I am sure of it," said I, warmly; "and did you know him in London, or when he lived in Paris?"

"When I lived in London," said he. "I was Secretary of the American Legation there for three years, and Harcourt and I had rooms together in the 'Albany.' Miss Oglethorpe, *why* are you regarding me with such an expression of disappointment? did I not warn you a moment ago?"

"Candidly," returned I, "I was only saying to myself, 'another personage'! Every man and woman whom I have met here this evening is an official of some sort; and, to tell you the truth, — the whole, naked truth, — I was hoping for a private citizen at last."

"How fortunate that I detected you at once, and can thereby relieve your mind! Plain 'Mr.,' if you please, Miss Oglethorpe; my days of secretaryship are of the past, and even then, you know, I could aspire to nothing more than — "

"Being an American citizen," interrupted I. And after this we fell to chatting and talking in the merriest way imaginable, and presently Mr.

Fairfax asked me if I was going to the Bachelors' german the next evening.

Kitty had explained to me that a huge card of invitation which had been sent to Barbara and myself meant that the Bachelors, a very exclusive and select club of gentlemen, gave a set of six or eight germans during the season, at a hall called Marini's, and that these germans were quite "the thing," and she would chaperon us there. So I told Mr. Fairfax that I believed Mrs. Bellair had intended taking us to the german.

"Then, if you are not already engaged, will you dance with me?" said Mr. Fairfax. "It will not be quite as large as the first one, and I think pleasanter on that account, as sometimes we crowd the floor a little."

Of course I accepted, and then Kitty reappeared with a gentleman of grave and somewhat severe aspect, whom she presented to me, and whom I immediately recognized as the clever author of "My Summer in a Garden." Just after, there was a little stir in the hall, and I looked up to see Kitty bow, with much *empressement*, to an

imposing-looking man who was making his way quietly to Miss Endicott's tea-table, where he slipped into a seat on her left in the most unobtrusive manner.

"'The first Gentleman of the land,'" said Mr. Fairfax, smiling, as he saw the question in my face; and you may imagine, Laura, how eagerly I looked at the President. He is very much as I supposed he would be,—a thorough gentleman in bearing; and his manner is the perfection of dignity without condescension, a *juste milieu* that I think we do not always find among those in high places.

"I see it in your eyes," said Mr. Fairfax, gayly; "the President always wins golden opinions from the ladies. Confess, Miss Oglethorpe, that you will go home and jot down a page full of raptures in your diary."

"I shall do nothing of the sort," said I, coolly (but with a conscious thought of the letter in which I knew I should write you all about it). "We New Yorkers are very proud of *our* President, Mr. Fairfax; don't you think we have a right to be?"

"Dolly," said Kitty, touching my arm to attract my attention, "I see Jack making signals of distress in the parlor door, and Barbara looking more statuesque than usual, — sure sign that she is bored; so I think we'll say good-night. Mr. Fairfax will take you to the parlor, and I'll meet you at the staircase."

"One moment, Mrs. Bellair," said Mr. Fairfax; "at what hour will you dawn upon us Bachelors to-morrow night? Miss Oglethorpe has kindly given me the german; don't deprive me of more than an hour of it."

"I have seven engagements for to-morrow," said she, "all between the hours of half-past twelve and seven o'clock, when I dine at the French Minister's; but I will try, — yes, I really will *try* and get to Marini's at a few minutes before ten."

"And with that I must, perforce, be satisfied," said Mr. Fairfax. "I am sure that Mrs. Bellair will keep faith with me as to the hour of arriving, for the wife of the French Minister receives for the gentlemen of the Bachelors' Club to-morrow evening, and will

probably leave her table rather earlier on that account."

When I got into the carriage with Kitty, Jack Bellair, and Barbara, that astute matron was evidently in great glee over something.

"I say, Kitty," said Jack (who adores his wife, but gives visible evidence thereof only by teasing and chaffing her on all occasions), "what are you chuckling about? If my eyes had not assured me to the contrary, I should say this exuberance of spirits at midnight after a maddening Washington day could only be produced by a battle-royal between you and Mrs. Tremaine, in which you had trodden on her with your accustomed vigor. She did n't happen to be hidden away in the dressing-room that you are aware of? because I hunted every other known nook for her."

"I 'll warrant you did," quoth Mrs. Kitty, with a semblance of supreme scorn. "O Jack, if I see you talking to that woman to-morrow at the german, I 'll devise some fiendish scheme of revenge."

"No doubt, dear," said he, with conviction; and I demanded who Mrs. Tremaine was.

"She's — my intimate enemy, Dolly," said Kitty. "I hereby anticipate Jack's rhapsodies."

"Don't pay the least attention to her, Jack," said I; "she has been showering delightful descriptions upon me all the evening of every woman I saw, and it's *sauce piquante* to hear her begin to abuse. Who and what is she, Kitty?"

"Too late for the subject to be enlarged upon properly," said Jack; "here we are at your door, and poor Mrs. Tremaine must be left until to-morrow, when you'll be sure to meet her at the german." And with laughter and kisses, Barbara and I descended at Aunt Oglethorpe's door.

It would make my letter too long, Laura, to give you an account, in detail, of all we three women did next day; another time I will give you a list of just one day's engagements in the midst of a Washington season. You could have no idea of what women can accomplish, unless you could see Kitty and me start and go the rounds. The married women are a constant source of wonder to me; for the fatigue alone they undergo in standing at their receptions

is something incredible, and the ease with which most of them shake off fatigue and renew the charge, day after day, fills an uneducated New Yorker with amazement, tempered with envy.

I had come home from a dancing reception just in time for a twenty minutes' nap before dinner (at home, that evening, luckily for my roses); and after taking tea with aunt in the drawing-room, and chatting with half a dozen of her delightful friends, Barbara and I went off to dress for the german. I wish I could report any change in Barbara; it nearly sets me wild, sometimes, when I look at her, and see how the last month has altered her. That high-bred air of distinction, which she never can lose, is perhaps heightened by her extremely cold, indifferent manner; and her beautiful dark eyes only gain interest because they are so pathetic and wistful that you feel as if there must be a history hidden away in their depths.

If I were a man, I should make violent love to Barbara just for the excitement of seeing whether anything would rouse her from this passionless calm. Do, Laura, find out for me

whether Harry stopped in London at all on his way to Cairo, and, if possible, what he did while there. Arthur Harcourt would know if he had been seen in town. Harry's address is the Pall Mall Club, you remember.

But I have run miles away from the Bachelors' german, have I not? so come back to Marini's — dear, tumble-down old place! — with me. The hall is not a very large one, with a tiny dressing-room below, where, as later experience has taught me, we women crush our gowns, wind ourselves up in each other's trains, lose our tempers as well as our checks, and fall upon the unfortunate maid who presides as the genius of this turmoil with the bitterest reproaches when she mixes our wraps together beyond hope of recovery. Barbara, Kitty, and I managed to occupy a spot about as large as a tea-tray in this apartment, while Kitty coaxed the much-enduring maid to bestow our cloaks in a certain corner, where we might find them without appeal to those worrying checks. Then Kitty gave herself a little shake, like a bird settling its plumage, and with infinite strategy

contrived to make her way to the door without inflicting dire misfortune upon her lovely new gown. Barbara was equally fortunate; but, alas! I heard an ominous sound, that assured me some mysterious string had escaped its fastenings, and was obliged to go back for repairs to the waiting-maid.

Luckily it was not irremediable, and on passing through the narrow door into a small hall beyond, I saw Jack standing with a crowd of other men, each Orpheus evidently waiting for his Eurydice to emerge from the Hades where he dared not seek her.

Kitty was not engaged for this german. She said the first one had tired her, and that to-night she preferred to sit behind me and see what I thought of it all. Jack had asked Barbara, and I made her accept; for I see no reason why she need give up her dancing because Harry is not here. And as soon as I entered the hall in Kitty's wake, Mr. Fairfax greeted me, and offered his arm to Kitty to take her upstairs.

The dancing-hall is above, at the top of a short flight of steps; and in a moment I found

myself in a long narrow room, well lighted and prettily decorated, bowing to the wife of the French Minister, who stood at the head of the room, accompanied by the gentleman who is the president of the club and who makes the introductions to the lady receiving. Kitty paused a moment to exchange a few words with her whilom hostess, and I went down the room with Mr. Fairfax. The chairs were all tied together and numbered, as usual, and stood in front of a line of benches which run all around the room, where the chaperons and other guests who are not dancing sit during the german. Most of the chairs were filled, and I found in a few moments that Mr. Fairfax was to lead, and then comprehended Kitty's skilful generalship of the night before, when she had secured me just the partner she wished for, with no apparent effort on her part. After taking a turn or two, just enough to convince me that Mr. Fairfax danced very well, I went to my seat and found Kitty ensconced behind me, with a crowd of other fair matrons who seemed to be enjoying their part of looking on at the dancers.

There were a great many pretty girls, mostly Washingtonians, but of course mingled with a number of strangers from all sections of the country. One of the prettiest, sweetest-looking of these I found was Miss Carey, the daughter of a Western Senator, and something quite foreign to our ideas of a "Western girl." No doubt, you, like myself, Laura, have a curious, exaggerated sort of a "horror" ticketed and inscribed in your mind as a specimen of the genus aforesaid; but I assure you it's a good deal like the Englishman's idea of a typical Yankee, — a creature of imagination only, and as mythical, nowadays, as the sea-serpent. The Western women whom I have met in Washington, where it is the outside impression that one is continually receiving shocks from their loud voices, ungrammatical conversation, and bad dressing, — the Western women, old and young, have been a revelation to me, particularly those from Ohio. Boston itself is met upon its own ground, in the cultivation and refinement of these charming women; and their good breeding is quite as conspicuous as any other attribute that they

possess, certain novelists to the contrary notwithstanding.

This particular girl, Marian Carey, I have met several times, and was glad to find that her seat was the next to my own in the german, because you know that one owes a pleasant evening quite as much to the girls as the men, in an entertainment of this kind. Have n't I seen girls do rude things at germans? And I am sorry to say that the greatest fault the Washington girls exhibit is the very rude conduct that some of them are guilty of toward strangers. They seem to me to divide themselves into three classes: those who have really good manners, —"the little leaven," you know, which makes one look forgivingly even upon their faulty sisters; those who have good manners when they feel inclined; and those who have no manners at all;—"the well-bred, half-bred, and underbred," as I heard Kitty say the other day, when I was asking her the meaning of a very extraordinary remark that I accidentally overheard at the first party I attended. It was a beautiful private party, given on New Year's night by the

wife of one of the most agreeable of our Senators, Mrs. Maitland, and I happened to be standing alone for a moment (while Jack had gone for an ice), just at the folding-door between the drawing-room and library, where the portière hid me from the speakers. They were a lady and gentleman, as I could tell from the voices; and the first sentence that caught my ear was from the lady.

"You might just as well make up your mind to it," said she; "the girls of my own particular set — the girls who came out last winter, I mean — have decided that if you gentlemen during the season devote yourselves to the strange girls who are visiting in Washington, and ask them as partners for the Bachelors' instead of *us*, by and by, when spring comes and we have our little parties and picnics and boat-rides to Mt. Vernon, we shall simply leave you out, and then see how you like *that*."

"Oh, you won't be so hard-hearted," said the gentleman, laughing, and evidently treating it as a joke, though a very poor one.

"Yes, we shall," said the girl, with enough

anger in her voice for me to perceive it; "and you men had better be warned in time, for we don't intend to sit without partners at our germans and see strange girls get all the cake."

By this time Jack had returned, and, being by no means devoid of curiosity, I begged him to tell me who the two people were at the other side of the portière. But when he stepped back to look, two well-known public men of note had taken their places; so I am yet in the dark as to who the young woman is who intends to read a stern lesson to her gentlemen friends at the trifling expense of her womanly dignity and self-respect.

Mr. Fairfax began the german at a little after ten; but before it he was extremely kind in bringing up quite a number of men and introducing them to me. Among these were two that I had heard of from Kitty, — Count Lennartsôhn, of the Austrian Legation, and the Hon. Geoffrey Ormond, a new secretary of the British Embassy. The former has been here for some years; but the Englishman is a fresh importation, and so dreadfully "English," my dear,

that I felt a wicked desire to chaff him. However, I had not an opportunity very early in the evening; and as Count Lennartsôhn was polite enough to take me out in the first figure, I was very much amused by his evidently considering me quite new to the social world as well as by his transparent, but most innocent vanity. He is a bright man, but abominably spoiled; and the style of his criticisms upon many of the people in the room was such an offence to good taste that I felt impelled to make one or two sharp replies. If you could have seen him open his lazy blue eyes, Laura, it would have done your heart good; and, oddly enough, I think he has certainly taken more interest in talking to me since then, because I do not join in the universal kow-towing before him which has made the Count the rather *too* free-and-easy person he now is. I wonder if he possessed this characteristic in Vienna. You might ask Arthur Harcourt if he knew him there.

The german began to grow more exhilarating; the music was good, and the floor capital, and I was enjoying myself thoroughly, when

a pause came, and I saw the inevitable ices, flanked by *bouillon*, appear; and Jack flung himself down in Miss Carey's vacant chair, while Mr. Fairfax supplied Kitty and me with a cup of the smoking fluid.

"Jack," said I, "relieve my mind by telling me who the pretty woman is that you've been 'taking out,' on an average, every other figure. I have a shrewd suspicion that it must be Kitty's particular admiration."

"Has Kitty been watching me?" said Jack, with a groan. "Yes, that's the lady." And we both glanced across the hall, where sat a young, fair woman, looking up into the eyes of the man next her with an air of confiding innocence that was positively enchanting — to the man!

"It's too well done, Jack," said I, unable to forbear laughing; "*l'ingénue* is a rôle that suits her face and style marvellously well, however. And what a pretty gown! the little full waist and blue ribbons are just in keeping. Do introduce me, Jack. Kitty is making furious signs in your direction; and if you want to avert a lecture at a late hour, you had best make an instant diversion."

Jack, in pretended dismay, availed himself of my suggestion, and in a moment more Mrs. Tremaine's brown eyes were smiling up in mine, and her gentle cooing voice was telling me that she had "*so* wanted to know me, and that lovely, *lovely* Mrs. Oglethorpe. Were we *really* cousins? Yes? Why, no one would ever believe it." And she showed her prettiest dimple in an adorable smile, as she delivered the remark.

"No?" said I, coolly, and letting a little of my secret enjoyment show in my voice. "Nobody ever contrived to say how Barbara's stateliness overshadows me quite so prettily, Mrs. Tremaine. I must come to you and learn how to put things gracefully." And I smiled back at her most amiably.

"Now I have said something, I don't know what," said she, with a helplessly appealing look at Jack. "Was I so very graceful, Mr. Bellair?"

"Only by accident, perhaps," said I, pinching Jack's arm under cover of his coat-sleeve. "You must come and call upon Barbara and me, Mrs. Tremaine, and find out how wholly, totally, and entirely unlike we are. She does n't care for

society; I enjoy it above all things, — even the shams."

"Do you?" she said, divided between wonder and — I saw it in her eyes — a desire to pay me in full, but not quite daring to do so. "How nice! I like everything and everybody too, Miss Oglethorpe; we ought to be great friends, and I hope we shall, if only on account of charming Mrs. Bellair."

"That's awfully kind of you," said I; "but don't imagine me 'quite too' catholic in my tastes." And there Jack dragged me off, for he was strangling with suppressed laughter.

"I did n't think you had it in you," said he, reproachfully; "it was positive cruelty to animals. You are as bad as Kitty, — every bit! By Jove, there's nothing in town I enjoy more than that very pretty, unutterably silly little woman."

"My dear Jack, she can scratch sometimes," said I. "How I *should* enjoy seeing Kitty bring her guns to bear upon her!"

"Should you?" said Jack. "If you have n't heard it already, I must tell you the encounter

they had last winter. For some reason, best known to herself, and with a lack of tact that I confess surprised me, Mrs. Tremaine undertook to try and not see Kitty on several occasions; not a real cut, you know, but just a manner that Kitty, with her customary energy, designates as 'nasty.' Kitty waited until one day she happened to meet Mrs. Tremaine at the house of a lady with whom (as Kitty knew) the little lady desired to stand particularly well. There were but four or five lady visitors in the parlor, and all were seated; so it was a palpable fact that Kitty was present, although Mrs. Tremaine ignored it. Up rose Kitty after a moment's pause, walked across the room, and, putting out her hand, said, in a voice of the deepest sympathy, 'Mrs. Tremaine, *how are your eyes?*' 'My eyes?' said Mrs. Tremaine, utterly taken by surprise. 'Yes, your eyes,' said Kitty, sweetly. 'I heard you were under the care of an oculist, and I was afraid something dreadful must be the matter with them, for you don't seem able at times to perceive quite *large* objects that are very near you. And your eyes are far too

pretty and too useful to lose, you know.' One of the ladies who was present told me that gravity was at discount in that parlor for some seconds, and I can bear witness that Mrs. Tremaine has been particularly civil to Kitty ever since."

"Ready to swear eternal friendship, no doubt," said I; and Jack waltzed me back to my seat again and went in pursuit of his partner.

Mr. Fairfax made a signal to the leader of the band, and during the pause that followed, he moved my chair forward a little to make room for a table upon which were placed the bouquets for the flower figure. Count Lennartsôhn came up to speak to me, bringing two attachés who desired a turn with me; and when I got back to my seat I found Madame Luilhier presiding over the flowers and distributing them to the dancers, in turn. She made room for me beside her, in her own gracious manner, and began asking me questions about our engagements for the next day. Madame is a New Yorker, you know, and an immense favorite in the Diplomatic Corps. She has the grace of a Parisian grafted upon the calm equipoise of an

American; the combination is rare, but when attained, unrivalled. I got a crowd of bouquets for my share in that figure, among them one from the Hon. Geoff, Count Lennartsôhn, and my partner, which last I consider a very pretty bit of attention on the part of Mr. Fairfax. Then this delightful german came to an end; and as Kitty was slowly emerging from her seat behind us, Count Lennartsôhn offered his arm to take me down the staircase.

"I have been asking Mrs. Bellair if your many engagements for to-morrow will admit of my adding one more to their number," said he. "If you have not already seen the Corcoran Art Gallery, Mrs. Bellair gives me permission to escort you, Mrs. Oglethorpe, and herself there. May I hope for it?"

"You may," said I, "provided gentle sleep comes to my rescue to-night. Do you know that I have not been quiet one moment of the day?"

"Nor will you be for many days to come, until the bell tolls for twelve at night on Mardi Gras," said Mr. Fairfax, on my other hand. "*Au re-*

voir, and pleasant dreams, Miss Oglethorpe!" and when I came out, alive, but palpitating, from the crush and jam of the dressing-room, the Hon. Geoff took me to the carriage, and the Count had transferred himself to Barbara.

I hope you are interested, my dearest Laura, for I am now fairly "launched," and unless I am vastly mistaken, shall have a charming winter. Do write every week, as you promised, and give my l— No, on second thoughts I won't send my love to Arthur; he owes me a letter, and I am deeply displeased at his tardiness. Tell him I have met his adored and adorable friend, and perhaps that may quicken his epistolary movements a trifle. Adieu! I am too sleepy for another line, but am ever and always

Your loving

DOLLY.

LETTER No. IV.

From Mr. Alan Fairfax, in Washington, to Mr. Arthur Harcourt, in London.

METROPOLITAN CLUB, JANUARY 12.

MY DEAR HARCOURT,

YOUR last letter was unaccountably detained, and as I have been more than usually tardy in replying, the interval is somewhat long since we have held direct communication.

Geoff Ormond delivered your message about the dressing-case: many thanks. I hope I put you to no trouble in the matter; but as the commission was for a lady, you are bound to swear the contrary, even behind the scenes.

Your letter found me much as usual; except for a trip to Canada and Mt. Desert, I have been in the treadmill all summer. Not that it is n't a pleasant mill, — as long as it 's a mill at all, one must make the best of it, — but I confess to a weariness of the flesh of late. I 'd like to

cut the whole concern and be off to Europe again. What do you say to a trip with me through the Tyrol for July?

Our season opens very well. There are the usual débutantes, — none specially attractive, — and a large sprinkling of strangers. Among these, O Arthur, is the fair one of your letters last year; do you remember, or has some other fair driven her from your too fickle heart? I mean Miss Oglethorpe; stay, there were two of them, only now one is Madam, having married her cousin Harry. It's not *that* one, is it? I have a fancy that your inamorata was the girl with gray eyes, not the one with brown.

Of course, your first question will be how I like her. I danced a german with the lady last week, and have seen her, on an average, four times a day ever since, and I think her about the most provoking specimen of Eve's daughters that has crossed my path in some years. My dear fellow, I trust it was *only* fancy on your part; what on earth would you ever do with a girl who is as full of mischief and *diablerie* combined as that very handsome and clever Miss Oglethorpe?

Lazy as you are, it must have fatigued you to the point of utter exhaustion to keep up with her amusing sallies; now I have adopted the old maxim of "*similia similibus*," and we have already had two very neat quarrels, and are hanging on the verge of a third. I have an idea that chain-lightning bottled up and then suddenly let loose upon a clear sky might produce something such an effect as the real rousing of that young lady's indignation; and, having always been rather fond of trying dangerous experiments, I feel an irresistible longing to see how the over charge of electricity would affect a bystander. Do you think I would be left to tell the tale, or no?

Certainly, two greater beauties have not visited the Capital in some years than your friends. Mrs. Oglethorpe is exquisite; except Mrs. Maitland (the Senator's young wife) we have had nothing to equal the pose of her perfect head and shoulders. There is a certain *hauteur* in her manner, veiled by a winning softness that is most alluring. Was she always thus? To me she looks like a woman who has had some

sudden shock or sorrow, and who is constantly on guard in consequence.

The men you know here are much as usual. Ormond, by the way, we find a good fellow when he lays aside a few English prejudices with which, at present, he makes himself ridiculous, and upon which it is Miss Oglethorpe's delight to chaff him. He takes it so well that I have hopes of him; ten chances to one, however, that he falls desperately in love with his tormentor. Talking of Ormond reminds me to ask you if you went over to Belfast for Christmas, and, if so, how are those pretty Miss Carruthers?

Let me know if there is a chance of your coming across this winter or spring, and don't fail to accept my always standing invitation if a possible thing for you to accomplish.

Faithfully yours,

ALAN FAIRFAX.

LETTER No. V.

From Mrs. Harry Fitzhugh Oglethorpe, in Washington, to Miss Katrine Suydam, in New York.

1700 K STREET, JANUARY 23.

MY DEAR KATRINE,

I CANNOT thank you enough for your last letter, this moment received. Your sympathy — as it ever is — was expressed with your usual tact, and I think I feel the better for having told you of my strange position. There are few people who can convey almost as much by what they *withhold* as what they say. I could not have borne to have you reproach Harry, and I thank you for your silence on that point. I will pay heed to what you say about growing morbid; too introspective a life is not good for me, I am aware.

As I wrote that last sentence I felt myself smiling at the curious incongruity of the remark from a woman who, to all appearance, cannot

have much time for self-analysis. This society business (for, to me, it is not *pleasure*) grows more arduous day by day, as the season advances, and I really should refuse to go so much but that physical exhaustion produces sleep, and sleep brings me a brief period of forgetfulness. Dolly takes to it kindly,—dear girl! she is such a belle, and looks better, I really believe, for all her dissipation. At present there are two men who are perfectly devoted to her; one is Mr. Ormond, who belongs to the English Legation, and the other a Virginian, named Alan Fairfax. I like the latter particularly. He is a thorough gentleman, and has seen much of the world; a man, I fancy, not easily moved by either passion or prejudice, with just enough indifference whether he pleases or not (within the bounds of entire civility) to pique Dolly's *amour propre.* I am a good deal amused, as well as interested, to watch this trio; the scale rises and falls with curious regularity.

Since I wrote you I have met such an interesting girl, with whom I am really fascinated. There is a class of society here, Katrine, which,

to my mind, makes one of the attractive features of Washington, and one which is never met elsewhere, — the cultivated, accomplished women who are what is styled "in office," that is, in Government employ. You can hardly realize how many there are of these noble women, working hard, earning their daily bread, who have been reared in affluence and enjoyed every luxury. And these ladies never lose caste by being thus employed. At the very best of the old Washington houses you will meet them, — houses so exclusive that the *entrée* is by no means easy for a stranger unless he comes introduced. One trait of Washington social life I must say I admire, and that is the total absence of a "dress standard," so to speak; and this fact enables many, who can afford to appear only in the simplest attire, to join with their richer sisters at entertainments where their own claims of family and good-breeding make the absence of silks and velvets totally unnoticed.

I learned much of this from Aunt Oglethorpe's evening receptions, where many of these graceful gentlewomen are seen; and the girl I spoke

of, Judith Randolph, came one night with her mother, a beautiful old lady, whom Judith supports entirely. If you could have seen the lovely picture the girl made, leaning her head, with its crown of red-gold hair, against the dark background of an old carved chair, in the depths of which her slender figure was almost lost. She wore the plainest sort of white gown, without a bow or a ribbon to relieve it; but it set off her singular beauty marvellously well. Imagine a broad, low brow; large, soft hazel eyes underneath eyebrows as delicately arched as those of the French Empress; a short, straight nose; and beneath it the sweet mouth, whose smile disclosed the little pearly teeth and a dimple lurking in the smoothly rounded chin. I always long to deck that girl in costliest fabrics; she seems made for the purples, and yet she works in one of the Departments for a salary of seven hundred and twenty dollars a year. Is n't it hard that I cannot send her a check for an amount that would make life easier? but I would never dare take the liberty, such is her wonderful bravery, self-control, and apparent contentment with her lot.

Dolly has taken a great liking for Judith, as well as myself; and, with Aunt Oglethorpe's aid, we often persuade her to accompany us to parties and germans in our carriage, and Kitty Bellair and I do duty as chaperons to the two girls. Last evening we had a gala night, Heaven save the mark! Imagine my being carried off first to a dinner of sixteen at the Maitlands', given for Dolly and me, and thence to two superb private balls, one at the French Minister's and the other at Mrs. Duchesne's.

The dinner was extremely handsome, very long, and would have been rather more tiresome than usual, but that my neighbor on the right happened to be Count Lennartsôhn, who is a shade less wearisome than most men here because he talks to me about another woman. I am tired to death of Barbara Oglethorpe, and though, by the irony of Fate, I know half a dozen men who seem willing to play the *cavalière servente* to me, I am far too proud to descend to becoming a *married* flirt. Count Lennartsôhn had tact enough to discover this, and, in addition, I accidentally penetrated his

secret early in our acquaintance; and as the arrow which found entrance in the armor that was proof against the siege guns which matrons and maids have vainly brought to bear on him, came from Judith's unconscious quiver, you can readily see why the Count is allowed to hover around me rather more than others. I think I am a tiny bit of a matchmaker, Katrine; at all events, I am interested in this affair. It takes me outside myself, and I am curious to see how it will end; whether love alone will carry the day with a foreigner brought up to consider a *dot* indispensable, and a *mariage de convenance* the only one desirable.

The Count contrived to find out from me at dinner that Judith was going with us to Mrs. Duchesne's, but not to the French Minister's; and as we meant to wind up at the former house (because of the german, which Dolly had promised to dance with Mr. Ormond), the Count accepted a seat in our carriage to Madame Luilhier's, and took me into the drawing-room. Owing to the Duchesne party, the rooms were not crowded, and we presently found an unoc-

cupied corner and two chairs, where I was quite contented to sit and listen to Count Lennartsôhn's gay rattle. After a little I became conscious of the very prolonged stare with which I was favored by a lady standing a few paces distant, and, turning to ask the Count who she was, I saw him catch her eye and bow. She had a rather striking face, but her whole style was pronounced, her eyes artificially darkened, and her gown in the worst possible taste; she might have been posing for Cleopatra, so wide was the girdle, set with jewels, about her waist, and so scanty the white draperies that trailed from it. Her necklace was a series of chains, one above another, that fell from her throat almost to her waist, and in her dark hair sparkled a diamond-studded dagger. I suppose I must have looked a little of my surprise, for the Count said, —

"So you have not met Madame de Vocqsal? I fancy she has been in New York since you came to Washington."

"To which of the legations does she belong?" I asked. "I am not conscious of ever having

seen her before, but she looks as if she knew me."

"Ah! but she has heard of you," said the Count, softly, "and she knows *Monsieur votre mari* very well. She does not belong to the Diplomatic Corps, Mrs. Oglethorpe; she is a Hungarian. I knew her family, but I never met her until last fall. She has a great fancy for Americans, and entertains them continually; you may see her any day on the Avenue."

I think the Count went on for several seconds talking of this foreigner; but I sat trying to recover my composure, which his careless mention of Harry had almost destroyed. So that was the reason of the insolent stare which I had undergone. I resolved I would ask Kitty all about Madame de Vocqsal, and become acquainted with her at the earliest opportunity. But just then the German and Swedish ministers came up to me for a little chat, and presently Mr. Fairfax and Kitty joined us, and I think it was partly owing to my preoccupation of mind that I promised to dance the german at Mrs. Duchesne's with Mr. Fairfax. The rooms began to

fill; all the diplomats were out in full glory; but we were due at the Duchesnes' at eleven, having promised to meet Judith in the dressing-room, and Kitty sent Mr. Fairfax in search of Dolly; so in a few minutes more our whole party had left Madame Luilhier's ball and were rolling down Connecticut Avenue toward I Street.

"Barbara," said Kitty, "you are now about to attend *the* private party, *par excellence*, of the season. Mrs. Duchesne is the most Washingtonian of Washingtonians. She has lived here for many years; her wealth is, like her charities, vast, and she is herself a delightfully genial, large-hearted woman. Here you will see the older, as well as the young people. Men and women who rarely take the trouble to go to balls always pay her the special compliment; and the result is a gathering of the fine minds, fine manners, and the *vieille cour* of our dear cosmopolitan city. — Order the carriage at half-past one, Jack; this german is always late, and we are all intending to dance it."

In the dressing-room, according to her prom-

ise, we found Judith, looking lovely in a gown which you or I, Katrine, would have considered nothing more than a simple summer afternoon costume; but on her, with her air of *ancienne noblesse*, and her total unconsciousness of the importance that most of our sex give to furbelows and feathers, it did not seem nor look incongruous. She carried a bunch of magnificent roses, and the donor was no longer a mystery when I saw the delicate color flicker up in her cheeks as she smiled a greeting to the Count on our way downstairs.

The rooms were thronged, and after a mere greeting from the silver-haired hostess, we passed on into the library at the end of the hall, where the rarest and most beautiful flowers decorated every available spot, and choice plants were grouped in the recess. Beyond, in the supper-room, the crowd was growing rapidly, and I declined Mr. Fairfax's offer to take me thither. The ball-room was on our left, and after a short interval I found refuge on a chair near the door. Presently Dolly waltzed down the room, and in obedience to a provoking glance over her part-

ner's shoulder, Mr. Fairfax, with an excuse to me, made his way toward her. I was quite willing to remain where I was, comparatively alone in a Washington crowd; in truth, I was too listless to wish for anything at that moment, unless that most impossible of all desires at a ball, — a glass of ice-water. The hum of conversation went on, and suddenly, with the curious distinctness with which one's own name always seems endowed, I heard mine spoken just behind me. The speaker was a woman.

"I know all about it," she said. "Mrs. Oglethorpe and her husband are cousins, and he married her to secure the fortune."

"It's just possible there might have been the excuse of love," said another woman's voice, dryly. "We all know the *penchant* you had for him, dear madame."

"True," said the low, penetrating voice, whose foreign accent helped me to guess its possessor; "but you would not believe the efforts he made to break away from that curious contract. *Entre nous*, he was furiously in love at the time he married."

"Indeed," said the other, "do you know you fill me with curiosity to see the bride, for—"

Here I lost something. The crowd seemed to surge away from me; in place of it, I saw Harry's face with that strange look on it that he wore on our wedding-day. A gentleman near me leaned forward and said something that I utterly failed to comprehend; he seemed alarmed,—then came a blank. I had fainted away, sitting there in my chair.

When the world came back again, and I opened my eyes, the air was blowing on my face from a window of the library; Dolly, looking terribly frightened, was fanning me, and Mr. Fairfax was holding a glass of water—that longed-for glass!—at my lips. I sat up, and made a valiant attempt to laugh.

"You see your Washington gayeties are too much for me, Kitty," said I to Mrs. Bellair, who had just joined the group. "I cannot imagine how I ever came to do anything so stupid."

"I should not have left you," said Mr. Fairfax, looking much concerned. "Will you let me order the carriage, Mrs. Oglethorpe, or will

you still do me the pleasure to keep our engagement for the german?"

I stood up, mortified and vexed to find that I had made a little scene; and my nerves steadied themselves, as my usual cold composure came back. "It is really nothing," said I, as Dolly implored me to take the carriage and go home. "I am quite ready to keep my engagement, Mr. Fairfax, for I have been sitting still nearly all the evening, and perhaps a waltz may set me straight again, — at least in my own good opinion."

I went back to the ball-room, Katrine, where they were already forming for the german, and danced for nearly two hours. To my great annoyance, I learned, by questioning Mr. Fairfax, that Madame de Vocqsal had left the house to attend still another reception at the Spanish Minister's, and that therefore my intention of being introduced to her was frustrated for the evening.

You know, do you not, why that remark of hers came upon me with such deadly force? I had hoped (*against* hope, alas!) that there was no active obstacle to my eventually finding some

corner in Harry's heart, and to learn that I had a rival, and, moreover, that it was known I had one, was more of a shock to me than I could bear just then.

The Duchesne ball was assuredly a field of thorns to our party; for Judith and the Count, by accident or design, drifted away from each other, and he left early, and Dolly came home in a fine humor, being evenly balanced between wrath and amusement. So she said; my private opinion is that Mr. Ormond was too *dévoué*, and Mr. Fairfax too belligerent, for I caught the last of a lively skirmish between her and the latter, wherein Dolly just managed to escape with the honors of war, — colors flying!

The next morning I woke with that singular feeling which we have all experienced that something has happened, and for a few minutes my heart and I took counsel together.

I rapped at Dolly's door to ask her what we had on hand for the day, feeling half inclined to go back to my bed and play invalid for twenty-four hours. But, alas! there was to be a breakfast at twelve, at Mrs. Vandeleur's, for which the

invitations had been issued ten days, and there was no escape. I must not fail to be present. Beside, the hostess is a woman whom I like; and as this was to be a party of married women, Kitty and I, as usual, would bear each other company. Aunt Oglethorpe was in her morning-room when we came down, and after our usual affectionate greeting she said gently, —

"I have quite a package of letters for you and Dolly this morning, my dear; but perhaps you may also like to see this, which I have just received from Harry. It may bring you later intelligence than your own." And she delicately averted her eyes as she placed the letter in my hand. I think she must know that I have not had one line from my husband since I came to Washington. Oh, Katrine, it is hard, *hard* to bear!

I did not read it then; even my fortitude was not proof against the sympathy of Dolly's eyes; and I kept the letter to read late that night after the day's whirl. It was very short; he had just arrived at Alexandria, and spoke chiefly of his voyage. He was well; there was a bright pas-

sage of affectionate *badinage* to his aunt, a pleasant message for Dolly, and for *me* — his wife — this: "Barbara, no doubt, is enjoying herself. Tell her to make the most of her Washington winter."

Katrine, say something to comfort me, for I think my heart will break!

JANUARY 26.

I laid down my pen just there, dear, because I could not go further. Now I must tell you about Mrs. Vandeleur's breakfast, and whom I saw there.

Mrs. Vandeleur herself is a leader here, and although not a Washingtonian by birth, may almost call herself one, for she was a belle at the Executive Mansion in Mr. Buchanan's day, and has retained her popularity ever since then, undiminished. We were twelve at table (always a pleasant number), and some of the brightest women I have met among them. I had the post of honor, at Mrs. Vandeleur's right, and opposite me sat Mrs. Cadwallader, the beautiful wife of a Cabinet Minister; I met her in Paris last year, and she has been very kind to Dolly

and me on account of her friendship for dear Aunt Jem. On my right was Mrs. Walton, the wife of a General in our army, and herself one of the most popular women in town; bright, full of repartee, and with ready tact that never fails her. Opposite her sat Miss Endicott, and at her left Mrs. Schuchardt, a warm-hearted, impulsive Southerner, who, notwithstanding her oft-repeated declaration that she "never has been reconstructed," always has a pleasant word and a charming greeting for those Northerners on whom she bestows her friendship. Kitty Bellair was at my side of the table, between Mrs. Digby, the pretty American wife of one of the English Secretaries, and Mrs. Lascelles, the wife of the Senator. Mrs. Maitland, also a Senator's wife, the wife of the Spanish Minister, and Madame Luilhier, made up our number; and it seemed to me a very congenial and carefully selected company.

Kitty, as usual, was in the very highest spirits, and she and Mrs. Walton plunged at once into a most animated discussion. I lost the first part of it, being engaged in listening to my hostess;

but presently Mrs. Walton's voice was audible, saying, "It vexes me beyond all patience," yet with a laugh that betrayed her amusement.

"I thought your patience was beyond reproach," said Mrs. Vandeleur, turning toward her.

"Not in this instance," said Mrs. Walton. "I was telling Mrs. Bellair of the criticisms of some New Yorkers upon our social life at the Capital, which are distinguished for their unfairness. These people — and they are friends of mine, I blush to say — came down here a year ago for a week's stay. The General and I had gone on a trip to the far West, and consequently this lady and her daughter went about to the official houses, were entertained by several newly arrived Northerners (who had not been here long enough to know much about the residents), and attended a levee and day reception at the Executive Mansion. And what was the result? They returned to New York under the impression that they had 'seen Washington' thoroughly; talked about 'mixed society,' sneered at the delights of a Republican levee, and con-

sidered me quite a renegade New Yorker, because I asserted with considerable warmth that the very best circle I had ever mingled in was that with which I am most familiar in Washington. I am out of patience with the attitude that we poor Washingtonians are continually being made to assume before the American public. I wish somebody would write a book about us with a grain or so of truth in it, — somebody who will suggest that we are *not* all lobbyism, bad English, and tobacco juice; that our manners are precisely the same as those of well-bred people elsewhere; and that we are tired of being made the butt and laughing-stock for our English cousins across the water, by a clan of pseudo-literary people who see us through the distorting medium of their own vulgarity."

"Hear, hear!" said Kitty, laughingly, as she helped Mrs. Walton to a sweetbread. "I think, Mrs. Vandeleur, that the 'coming American novelist' must be in our midst."

"I perfectly agree with Mrs. Walton," said her hostess; "and among other items let me suggest to you that you say a good word for that much-

abused, thoroughly American institution, the Presidential Levee. Did it ever strike you that there is quite another side to it than the one of crush, jam, and the 'great unwashed' which seems to be its abiding aspect? I have been to a great number of levees in years gone by, as now, and have frequently been among the ladies receiving, and it seems to me that to a true American it is composed of many elements, and some of them by no means susceptible of ridicule. Of course, it is usually a crowd, but an amiable and a well-behaved one. In it I recollect to have seen many strong, honest faces, figures not clad in fashionable attire, but with entire propriety, whose genuine pleasure at beholding the Chief Magistrate and the house where he dwells was a charming thing to witness. I remember one of these, an elderly woman, perhaps the wife of some New England deacon, dressed in her best black silk, which she wore with an air of modest appreciation; and as her homely, but kind and motherly face lit up with a smile as she touched the President's hand and made a slow, old-fashioned courtesy, I could see the gratifi-

cation of perhaps a lifelong desire written upon her countenance. At last she had seen the representative of the Sovereign People; can you not imagine how the old lady would sit in the winter evenings, before the wood-fire in the dear old New England homestead, and relate to a circle of eager listeners how 'Eben and I called upon the President' and saw the glories of the White House? Why, she was, no doubt, an oracle for the rest of her days in the quiet village; and for my part I am sure she would give a picture of Washington that would possess more innate refinement than that told by those who would scorn to touch her homely hand and sneer at her countrified gown."

"You must have seen many and varied phases of life during those evenings," said I, charmed with Mrs. Vandeleur's enthusiasm.

"Of course there was the usual kaleidoscopic effect," said she, smiling at a humorous recollection. "For instance, just after the war, I had a comical little colored boy among my household; he was very bright, droll, and capable, and about ten years of age. My footman being in-

disposed one day when I intended going to one of Mrs. Grant's day receptions, I gave orders that Cripps should be summoned to take his place and open the carriage door for me. The house was searched in vain. Cripps had disappeared, and I went off without him, ending a round of visits by driving to the Executive Mansion. I had been there some little time, and was making my way, with a lady friend, through the red parlor into the East Room, when, to my amazement, my eyes fell upon a small ebony image seated on one of the blue satin chairs just inside the door. There sat the missing Cripps, hat in hand, surveying the moving crowd with a countenance of portentous gravity until he happened to catch my eye. In a second he darted up and wriggled his way to my side. 'I 'se done it!' said he, in a voice of subdued triumph. 'I has sat on de red chairs an' de blue chairs an' de yaller ones; and for all dat boy Jack,' — one of the President's servants, and a grown man, — 'for all dat boy Jack's talkin', dey is n't half as soft and comfor'ble as dose ole green chairs down to *our* house, madam.'"

"Had Cripps been introduced to the President?" asked Mrs. Schuchardt, with a mischievous glance.

"On the contrary," returned Mrs. Vandeleur, "he knew his place quite too well to pass in review among the others. He had gone for a specific purpose, to enjoy the privilege of comparing my chairs with those whose 'comfor'bleness' Jack had, no doubt, been lauding; and that was Cripps's first and last visit to the Executive Mansion."

"I echo Mrs. Walton's wish that a more just chronicler of our life in Washington may some day dawn upon us," said Mrs. Cadwallader. "The only article I ever saw which was at all confined to truth in the matter was one that appeared in 'Harper's Magazine' some two years since, called 'Washington as it is!' That was well written; and the author knew whereof he spoke."

"I confess," said I, "that I have been somewhat surprised at the absence of the typical Western woman, the pushing New Englander, and the free-and-easy Southerner that I have

read about as indigenous to the social soil of the Capital."

"We do have them, of course," said Mrs. Schuchardt; "but you must go into strictly political cliques to find them, and of late you rarely meet any real 'characters' even at the official houses."

"You met one at mine, however," said Mrs. Cadwallader, with a merry twinkle of her beautiful brown eyes. "Ask Mrs. Schuchardt to tell you about it, Mrs. Oglethorpe; I should spoil it."

"I am not so sure of that," said the lady thus appealed to. "You know, Mrs. Oglethorpe, that I am not good friends with the present Administration, and therefore I rarely go to any of the official houses. But Mrs. Cadwallader and I were dear friends in *ante bellum* days, and I sometimes slip into her parlors on a Wednesday afternoon for a cup of her nice tea, and a chat with the friends whom I am sure to meet there. On one occasion, when it was quite crowded, I had managed to find a seat on the sofa in the back parlor, and happened for the nonce to be

alone among strangers. One of these, a tall, rather good-looking woman, seemed, as I saw, to be eying me with considerable attention. There was nothing especially offensive about her, except her forlorn air of awkwardness and her curiosity about me. I began to imagine that my bonnet must be askew, or that I had parted with my lawful belongings in some mysterious manner, so prolonged was her stare. At last, with a desperate resolve written upon her face, she made her way to my side and said abruptly, 'May I sit down by you?' I assented politely, and drew back my gown to make room for her, wondering what was coming next. She still surveyed me with eager attention; but I kept silence. Then came another burst. 'May I call and see you?' 'Really, madam,' said I, for a second quite taken by surprise, and concluding that there must be something very fascinating in my appearance, 'it would hardly pay you to do so. I am the wife of a private citizen, and a Southerner as well; we live in the most quiet manner, and do not entertain at all; still, if it would afford you any

pleasure, pray come by all means.' Her countenance fell; she grasped her pocket-handkerchief, and said amazedly, 'Dear me! *I thought you were an official!*'"

"After all," said Kitty, when the laughter subsided, "you ought to regard it a compliment; for the poor woman evidently considered 'an official' the acme of all that was to be desired in a visiting acquaintance."

"Speaking of officials," said Miss Endicott, "I suppose we are all going to the ball at the English Legation next week, which is given for the Marquis of Lorne?"

"He is a very charming, unaffected young man," said Mrs. Lascelles, from the other end of the table. "I met him in Rome several years ago. You are going to meet him at the dinner given by the President, are you not, Miss Endicott? We received our invitations for it this morning."

Miss Endicott assented, and presently the conversation drifted off to more personal matters, and I was greatly interested, as well as amused, at the clever little *on-dits* and droll

stories told of Washington life. If I had but time, I could write it all out for you, Katrine; but the clock warns me of the approach of the "wee sma' hours," and I must leave you. I have a lunch, two receptions, and a dinner for to-morrow, and after the dinner some private theatricals, and a ball, by way of a winding up of the day's engagements. Adieu, dear, with much affection,

Devotedly yours,

BARBARA OGLETHORPE.

LETTER No. VI.

From Miss Judith Randolph, in Washington, to Miss Georgia Carlisle, in Richmond.

2030 F STREET, FEBRUARY 4.

MY DEAR GEORGIA,

I DO not wish to begin my letter with an excuse or apology, but I am ashamed to send so tardy a reply to your dear, kind letter, especially after the invitation which you send to mamma and me to pay you the long-talked-of visit. Alas, dear Georgia, it must still be a pleasure in anticipation, for we cannot make it at present, for the very prosaic reason that funds are low and the money-market unsteady; which means that I am by no means certain how long I am going to be able to retain my place in the Department. Of course, to lose it just now, with mamma in such precarious health, would be absolute ruin to me; but as I am, unfortunately, not upon the permanent

roll, I may be turned out at any time, and therefore it is necessary to remain closely at my post.

I am having a most charming winter; indeed, I had no idea it could be so pleasant. I have been allowed, lately, to do part of my work at home, which enables me to give mamma a much later breakfast than she would consent to take if I were going to my office work at nine in the morning, as usual. By writing very rapidly, and getting up an hour earlier (at five o'clock for the past month), I can manage to finish my daily average of writing by three in the afternoon, and that sets me free for the remainder of the day. I have been out a good deal, for me, and have enjoyed it immensely. Dear Madam Oglethorpe's kindness has been, as always, my great resource, and she has her two lovely nieces now visiting her, who have, if possible, vied with the dear old lady and Mrs. Bellair in making my life very pleasant. I have been to three balls — think of it! — and ever so many afternoon receptions, and you never would recognize my ancient black silk gown under the fur-trimmed

mantle which my aunt in New York was kind enough to send me as a Christmas gift, and which really transforms me into a "swell" for once in my life.

I must tell you the very absurd adventure that befell me at the beginning of the season, and which for some reason seems to have secured me a very good friend. One afternoon early in December, I was coming down H Street at a pretty rapid pace, for I had been at the Department all day, and at three o'clock was hurrying home to mamma. It was a disagreeable day; a rather heavy snow (for us) had fallen the night before, and the asphalt pavement was in a state of slush and water that made it anything but agreeable for a pedestrian. Just as I set my foot down to cross the street, opposite the Metropolitan Club House, I became aware that one of my sandals was slipping off at the heel (as those wretched inventions have a way of doing at the most inopportune moments), and I floundered about in the mud for a minute, hoping to retain it on my foot, at least as far as the sidewalk; but the provoking sandal

slipped away from me, and giving a bound sailed off down the gutter, directly in front of the Club door. Now, even an India-rubber sandal is a matter of consideration with me, for I have not a superfluity of pence to purchase another pair; so you may imagine the dismay that was no doubt depicted on my face as I watched the treacherous thing sail off triumphantly, and realized that as not only the Club windows but the Club steps were full of gentlemen, of course I could not start on a crusade after my shoe. All this passed rapidly through my mind as I stood, hesitating, and really dreading to put my unprotected foot down into the water and go on my way; but in less time than I have taken in the telling it, one of the gentlemen on the steps ran rapidly down to the gutter, put out his cane, fished up the recreant sandal on the end of it, and drawing his handkerchief from his pocket rolled the muddy little shoe in it, and walking up to me raised his hat, and said with polite gravity, "Permit me, madam, to assist you in your dilemma," handing me the little parcel as he spoke!

I know I flushed as I thanked him; and there was nothing left for me to do but bow my thanks and walk off with my returned property. I was so confused for the moment that it never once occurred to me that I was appropriating the stranger's handkerchief, and when I got to the Avenue, and there took the car for home, it was too late, of course; so I put it in my pocket, to consult mamma what was to be done with it. When I opened it, I found it was marked in the corner with a letter "L" and a coronet, and immediately concluded that I was indebted to some member of the Diplomatic Corps for the civility. So that evening I ran over to see Mrs. Bellair, and you may imagine my amazement when I entered the drawing-room to find, occupying a low seat near his hostess's elbow, the very gentleman about whom I had come to consult her, — Count Lennartsôhn, of the Austrian Legation.

Of course we had a hearty laugh over his new version of Sir Walter Raleigh, and the little *contretemps* put us quite on a friendly footing at once. I have seen a great deal of him since

then; he is very fascinating,—a great deal *too* fascinating, Georgia, for a girl in my position to see much of,—and yet, why so? I am perfectly able to take care of myself, and this pleasant friendship makes my winter quite a different one from last year; am I foolish to feel that, for once, I will drift with the tide, and enjoy the present as other girls of my age do, without letting black Care fold her mantle over my youthful shoulders?

I have told you nothing, as yet, of either Mrs. or Miss Oglethorpe. I am very much drawn to them both, but most, I think, to Barbara, that is, Mrs. Oglethorpe, my old friend Harry's wife. I am not sure whether she knows that Harry and I were such good and intimate friends; for upon the two occasions when I mentioned her husband to her, she became so icy-cold in manner that I begin to fear some one has been foolish enough to tell her of the boy-and-girl attachment that Harry and I had for each other. It lasted about two months, and quietly burned out; nothing in the world for which that beautiful woman need give herself the smallest uneasiness.

Aside from this, I am a good deal troubled about her. Harry made me a sort of half-confidence just before his marriage which I think may partly account for the look of bitterness that I sometimes catch in the depths of her lovely, great brown eyes. I feel, instinctively, that she is not happy; and yet surely, if ever a woman's lot was cast in pleasant places, hers is, — Mrs. Oglethorpe's should be an exceptionally cloudless life. There is a mystery somewhere, and I have a curious feeling that perhaps I may be the one who will penetrate it.

But here I am, you will perhaps say to yourself, writing about comparative strangers to you; and yet, dear Georgia, I fancy you will be enough interested in what concerns *me* to hear with patience the varied details of my daily life.

I wish I could write you a favorable account of mamma. It seems to me she grows weaker, and yet it is by such imperceptible stages that I can hardly detect wherein the change lies. The cold weather has been hard for her; but now that our February sun has begun to shine, I hope for

better things. She has had but a single turn of those heart spasms since last July, and her breathing seems to me in some respects better. I took her out to drive one balmy day last week, Mrs. Bellair having sent her carriage for us, and I know the soft air did her good. She sends much love to you, as always. Perhaps, when the spring comes, I may be able to bring her down to Richmond; you know she always talks of it as "home." Alas! I fear her gentle life received a fatal blow when we were forced to leave our home there; child as I was, I can recollect her tears and sorrow when we bade adieu to her life-surroundings as girl, wife, and mother.

I am hoping before very long to secure a place on the permanent roll, either in this Department or some other; and that will bring me comparative ease. I dare not hope for any increase of pay; there are too many applicants, and it takes nearly as much influence as electing a Senator, to obtain a simple clerkship. I should be entirely satisfied with the assurance that I am not to *lose* what I have already; it is the suspense

that, like the sword of Damocles, makes life in a Department so hard to bear.

Forgive this little growl, and believe that I do not often indulge in such; while, with love to all your dear household, I am ever,

Your attached,

JUDITH RANDOLPH.

LETTER No. VII.

From Miss Dolly Oglethorpe, in Washington, to Miss Laura De Peyster, in London.

1700 K STREET, FEBRUARY 20.

MY DEAR LAURA,

AT last, after the very pleasantest of seasons, after an amount of gayety that I have never seen equalled, and in which the greatest hospitality and kindness have been shown me, the bell has tolled midnight on Mardi Gras, and Ash-Wednesday and Lent are upon us. In some respects I must say candidly that I do not see very much difference. Of course we forswear balls and dancing; receptions are over, although at some of the pleasantest houses the ladies still receive informally at their five o'clock tea; but, Lent notwithstanding, I think we manage to put a good deal of enjoyment in it, and vibrate between our services at St. John's and quiet little breakfasts of six or eight, whist parties, and

theatre parties of limited numbers, with plenty of horseback riding, trips to Mt. Vernon (where I have not yet been, by the by), and rehearsing for private theatricals which are to come off some time during Easter week for one of the pet charities. I confess to more time for letters and reflection; and you shall have the benefit of both.

Skip the moralizing if you choose, dear, should I treat you to a modern version of Saul among the prophets; but at least you are bound to be interested in the winding up of my season, even in far-away London.

As I don't keep a diary, I really forget when I last wrote you, but I fancy it was about the middle of January, and therefore you have not heard, unless through the newspapers, of the advent here of the Governor-General of Canada, Lord Lorne, and the way he was entertained among us. I saw him before the ball given for him at the Legation; for the British Minister brought him, one evening, to call upon Aunt Oglethorpe, and I had quite a lively chat with him on that occasion. MacCallum More's son would always possess an interest for me, you

know, because of the drop of Scotch blood in my veins on the distaff side; so the call, though short, was a very pleasant little episode to me.

The next night we all went to the ball (excepting, of course, Aunt Oglethorpe), and, as a ball, it was a grand success. Every woman put on her best gown to do honor to the occasion, and there was an exceptional gathering of beauty, I assure you. Barbara looked like a vision, all in white, with the Oglethorpe diamonds on her neck and arms; and Judith Randolph was positively lovely in a dark blue velvet gown which Barbara had finally induced her to accept. Judith fought a long time over it, but you know what Barbara is when she stoops to conquer; she seldom suffers defeat, and in this instance fairly charmed Judith into consent. Aunt Oglethorpe thought it rather too old a gown for a girl like Judith, but was so delighted with the effect that she added some fine old English lace, like a cobweb in texture, to the square neck and elbow-sleeves; and with her Titian-colored hair, Judith looked very much like some Venetian lady of the *cinque cento*, just stepped from her picture frame.

We arrived at the Legation in very good season, for once, and found the gentle young hostess receiving her guests with that pretty, quaint, half-foreign manner which makes her so attractive in the conspicuous position that she fills so well in society. The Minister stood at her left, and just beyond him, Lord Lorne, who wore his Order of the Thistle, and looked, with his blue eyes, light hair, and fresh complexion, a veritable "Scotch laddie," for he is really very boyish in appearance. The house is a fine one, and there is a beautiful ball-room in the rear, to which I soon found my way, and where I had the honor of dancing in the same set with Lord Lorne when he opened the ball, with the French Minister as my partner. After that the dancing became general, and before long I was engaged four or five deep, and — I'll make a clean breast of it, as this is the penitential season and time for confessions — keeping my best dances for Mr. Fairfax, and gradually growing wrathful because he was late in making his appearance.

When he did come, I was talking to the Hon. Geoff, and perhaps that was the reason why he

did not look best pleased as he bowed over my hand. Laura, I have had a very queer experience lately. I, Dolly Oglethorpe, am continually being induced, I don't exactly know how, to say and do small things which are utterly foreign to my nature; and the absurd part of it all is, that, notwithstanding my *ego* is valiantly protesting within me all the time, I yield in the most submissive manner before I am quite aware that I am doing so. I don't like it! There is a species of witchcraft about it that is positively uncanny, and perhaps that was why I gave the Hon. Geoff more encouragement that night at the ball than I ever had done before, and for which I have been sorry enough since.

I don't remember whether I wrote you of a certain Hungarian who is at present rather amazing society here, — a widow named Madame de Vocqsal. Nobody seems to know very much about her, although she is visited, and must have brought letters to be admitted to the houses where we meet her. She is excessively bad form, though perhaps I am rather prejudiced against her because she seems to cherish

an active animosity toward Barbara, and has displayed it upon several occasions. From a remark which Barbara happened to overhear, it seems that Harry must have been flirting with the fair widow, or at least have known her sufficiently well for madame to enlarge upon the fact of her acquaintance with him. Barbara is so over-sensitive upon anything connected in the remotest degree with Harry, that she places herself considerably at madame's mercy, and every time they meet there is sure to be a veiled sarcasm of some kind exchanged between them. Barbara was standing in the hall, near the ball-room door, when I came through it with Mr. Ormond. Standing near her were Mrs. Walton, Mrs. Lascelles, and pretty Miss Carey, talking to Madame de Vocqsal, who was resplendent in a blue satin brocaded with silver, *very décolletée* with merely a reminiscence of sleeves. The gentlemen in attendance were Jack Bellair and Captain Northopp, a very agreeable navy officer, who is a devoted admirer of Barbara, and who, like most men, makes no impression whatever upon her.

"Is it not a pretty ball?" said Mrs. Lascelles, as I came up. "I have not seen as many pretty women together this year, I think. Lord Lorne should carry back a very agreeable impression to Canada. Why, there is Judith Randolph," as she waltzed past us with Count Lennartsôhn, "how glad I am to see her here, enjoying herself!"

"Barbara acted as the sun, I as Boreas," said I; "and our united efforts were crowned with triumph."

"It strikes me that is a very promising *affaire*," said Mrs. Walton, with a smiling glance at the vanishing couple.

"It would be a fortunate thing for the Count," said Barbara.

"Ah!" said Madame de Vocqsal, who had listened, with her faint, sarcastic smile, "what a pity that pretty young lady should be so *coquette!*"

"Yes?" said Barbara, with languid interest.

"Surely you, dear madame, of all people, should be aware of it," said Madame de Vocqsal.

"I quite fail to understand why," said Barbara.

"I have not perceived that Miss Randolph possesses more than the average love of pleasing, to which we women must plead guilty."

"How generous you are!" sighed madame, softly; "but you have reason. In Mrs. Oglethorpe's matchless self her husband may well forget his *tendresse* for that pretty little Virginian."

I could have strangled the woman, Laura; it was a mean and treacherous way to strike Barbara through the girl she befriends. I saw Mrs. Walton's eyebrows go up, as she exchanged a glance with Mrs. Lascelles; but Barbara's loyalty to Harry was quite equal to the occasion; she looked the Hungarian calmly in the face as she replied, —

"Mrs. Oglethorpe, as well as her husband, never forgets a friend — nor forgives a foe. Harry would be quite flattered to know what a study you have made of him. I must enlighten him in my next letter." And she ended with a little laugh, which even to my practised ears sounded as careless as she meant it should.

Mrs. Lascelles turned the least bit of her ivory

shoulder toward Madame de Vocqsal as she addressed Barbara, and the gesture was sufficient to make that lady color even under her rouge.

"Miss Randolph's mother is my dear friend," she said warmly; "and I have been much gratified, dear Mrs. Oglethorpe, to see how happy you and your cousin"—with a pleasant nod to me—"have made Judith this winter. In fact, I am half inclined to be jealous; for I never yet, with all my efforts, have succeeded in inducing her to go out as much as you have done within the past six weeks.—Mr. Bellair, is that my husband wandering off in the direction of the supper-room? won't you call him to me?"

"Suppose we all follow his example," said Captain Northopp, offering his arm to Barbara; and they turned away, leaving Mr. Ormond and me to seek two chairs, near the staircase, where I waited while he went in search of my supper.

Now it just happened, as I sat there for a few seconds by myself, that I could see very plainly another couple who also occupied two chairs not far from me. These were Mr. Fairfax and Mrs. Tremaine; and really, Laura, I know of

nothing that Alan Fairfax could have done which would annoy me so much as to flirt with that pretty little woman. She has never been fond of me since our first meeting, when I did not endeavor to conceal my amusement at her *rôle* of innocent girlishness, and on several occasions, of late, I have been aware that Mrs. Tremaine, like Barkis, "was willin'" to promote Mr. Fairfax to the post of first favorite and chief corner-companion for the remainder of the season. To-night was the first time that she had been successful, and I began to share what Jack calls "Kitty's prejudices" on the spot.

Mr. Ormond was gone an unconscionable time, for the supper-room was crowded; and before he came back, Mrs. Tremaine's husband had come in search of her, and, strange to relate, absolutely carried her off into the parlor. By the species of clairvoyance that we women employ, I became aware that Mr. Fairfax was making his way toward me; so I laid my fan down on the chair next me and awaited his arrival.

"Detected!" said he, bending down to look in my eyes as he took up the fan; "if this be a

mortgage on the chair, permit me to foreclose it." And he slipped quietly into the seat, with the half-provoking, daring audacity that always attracts me in spite of myself.

"I don't think you are the mortgagee," said I, half mollified, and yet resolving not to be appeased so easily.

"Don't assert that it 's Geoff Ormond," returned he; "have you not punished me sufficiently this evening? Where are my waltzes, — the two you faithfully promised, and the four that I secretly vowed to steal from some other man? Answer the indictment, and plead not guilty if you can."

"I read somewhere once that there lies a great deal of merit in a soft answer," retorted I; "evidently you have been studying it to some purpose, Mr. Fairfax. Waltzes, indeed! When you have been enjoying yourself in the shadow of that palm-tree for the last half-hour, inhaling the fragrance of Mrs. Tremaine's bouquet. Don't pose for sympathy; I have not an atom of that article to waste on you!"

He looked up, saw Mr. Ormond within six paces of us, and said swiftly, in a tone which I

never heard him use before: "I should be *more* than contented if you would waste one thought of your noble, frank soul on me, God knows!" and then he sprang up with a gay, good-humored—

"Have you come out of that Balaclava unharmed, Ormond? I had n't the courage to attempt it; and although Mrs. Tremaine looked longingly in that direction, I stoutly refused to see the propriety of getting her an ice. Champagne, too! Truly, Miss Oglethorpe, he deserves nothing less than the Victoria cross for his prowess."

"Ah, there now, don't chaff a fellow!" said the Hon. Geoff, holding my champagne glass dutifully, whilst I guided my spoonful of terrapin to my lips with a hand that I *could* not make steady, try as I might, for I felt Alan Fairfax's eyes were noting my trembling fingers.

"Do go and refresh yourself, Fairfax. Don't you see I'm fainting from fatigue, and must possess myself of this chair instantly?"

"I see that you have nine points of the law in your favor," said Mr. Fairfax, laughing, as

the big Englishman dropped down at my side; "I never dispute more than six, so I'm off for that champagne." And without meeting my eyes again, he left us.

After that, other men came up, and the Legation Ball resolved itself into much the same routine of other balls of the season. Barbara and Judith divided the belleship between them; and Count Lennartsôhn was, for once, rather left behind in the race by the army and navy officers and the *attachés*, who vied with each other in securing Judith's dances.

I did not stay for the german. Barbara looked a trifle pale, and I preferred going home with her; so we left Judith under Kitty's chaperonage and came away rather early.

But I had my waltz — just one — with Mr. Fairfax. He made his way quietly to my side as I stood in the drawing-room chatting for a moment with Mrs. Lascelles and Lord Lorne; and my best dance was my last, — does that go without telling, Laura? He gave one single look in my face as he brought me out where Barbara waited for me at the foot of the stair-

case. I had a bunch of deep red roses in my hand (his gift), and as we moved down the hall one fell, half-broken, on the floor. Mr. Fairfax stooped to pick it up. I put out my hand to take it, but with a little smile he slipped it in his vest-pocket. "'That's for remembrance,'" he said, "and good-night." As a rule, Laura, I have not a particle of sentiment connected with withered flowers; and yet, somehow, I believe the rest of those rosebuds are reposing in my drawer upstairs at this very moment. (*En parenthèse*, I have the grace to be ashamed of the confession, whether I am *of the fact!* Ah, there, my dear Laura, is a "cropper" which my Pegasus utterly refuses!)

I had very little time for reflection on any subject just then, however, for the Legation Ball came at the end of the season, and I must go on and relate to you how we wound up. I have a recollection of promising you, in one of my previous letters, a "true, vivid, and particular" account of the engagements of one Washington day, and I think justice can be fully done the subject by telling you what we did on Mardi

Gras, though perhaps it was a little more complicated by two weddings which took place on the same day.

Having attended the last Bachelors' german the night previous, I was tired enough to oversleep myself on Tuesday morning; and Saltus, Barbara's maid, brought up my coffee and rolls with a message from Aunt Oglethorpe that it behooved me to use despatch in my toilet if I were going to Miss Throgmorton's wedding at twelve. So I dashed into my gown as fast as possible, and flew down to join Barbara in the morning-room just as Grymes announced that the carriage was at the door. The day was not a very cheerful one, and a slight drizzling rain came on as we drove up Connecticut Avenue and joined the queue of carriages in front of the Throgmortons' superb house. On the steps we met Count Lennartsôhn and the Spanish Minister, who kindly convoyed Barbara and me through the crowded hall. Going up the staircase to the dressing-room was an impossibility, as the hour for the ceremony was so close at hand; so we managed to bestow our wraps be-

neath a friendly chair in the vestibule, and made our way slowly inside the great hall, where the light from the stained-glass windows sent its varied hues down the broad staircase and gave a curiously picturesque effect to the scene. We were just in time; for the guests drew back either side of the white ribbon which divided their ranks, as the bride came slowly down the wide steps, and by her side the stately form and fine massive head of one of America's most distinguished statesmen, — "the Warwick of the Cabinet," — her father. I have seldom seen anything more impressive than the service that followed. Surrounded by the friends who loved her, in the presence of the most distinguished company which could be gathered in our capital city, with the President to bid her God-speed, and the Cabinet and Diplomatic Corps to vie with each other in graceful compliments, Miss Throgmorton said the solemn words which made her a wedded wife.

The ceremony seemed very short, and then we all went up, as usual, to take the bride's hand, scrutinize the groom, and slowly drift

away into the other rooms; and the wedding-breakfast was somewhat shortened by the fact that many of the guests had half a dozen engagements elsewhere. For me, I dared not touch more than a glass of champagne, for I was going with Barbara and Kitty to a lunch at Mrs. Lascelles', which proved to be one of thirty ladies, and where every woman exerted herself to say a score of brilliant and amusing things by way of going out in a blaze of glory, with the Carnival; and by the time we had said adieu to our hostess it was half-past three, and we had to look in at a dozen houses where the ladies were receiving calls, and then wind up, after five, at a dancing reception at Mrs. Walton's. Then home, as fast as aunt's horses could carry us, for we dined *en grand tenue* at half-past six, the early hour being in deference to Miss Cadwallader's wedding, although we were obliged to forego the church ceremony, and only attend the reception at the house, because of the private party at the Executive Mansion with which ended our engagements for the day.

Are you gasping for breath, Laura, and wondering whether we were alive next morning? This was almost equal to a "field day" that Kitty and I had the week before, when we began operations by driving down to the Marine Barracks for a dance at eleven in the morning, and came back to a breakfast of sixteen, at Kitty's, at one o'clock, made twenty-four visits (including Cabinet calls) in the afternoon, and attended a dancing reception at Mrs. Vandeleur's at five; dined, went to some private theatricals from eight to ten, and then to a german at Marini's, where I danced untiringly until nearly one o'clock in the morning! There's a real Washington day in the height of the season for you; suppose you come over and try how you like it next year?

But I have kept Aunt Oglethorpe's dinner waiting, — a *faux pas*, even upon paper, — and you can't think *how* charming her dinners are. She invariably selects just the right people, and seats them with such admirable art that there is never a break in the conversation, herself giving the keynote. That night we had two of the

Foreign Ministers, the Chief Justice, the Senator and Mrs. Lascelles, General and Mrs. Walton, and a courtly old Admiral, who is one of aunt's great friends. The conversation turned at last upon the Washington of years gone by,—Washington in the days of Webster and Clay, of Sumner and Fessenden, of the wits and the beauties of *ante bellum* days,—and this, interspersed with many an amusing anecdote of those, the mention even of whose names suggests that the great lights are behind us, and that we of the present generation can hardly hope that our tiny candles will ever be remembered in comparison, unless somebody turns on an electric light suddenly; and even then it would lack the tender grace of the *ancien régime.*

We left the table at nine o'clock, and got into our wraps for the wedding. Mrs. Walton and the General begged me to go with them; so I left Barbara to come with Jack and Kitty, and we proceeded on our somewhat perilous journey. I say "perilous" advisedly, for unless you know by sad personal experience what Washington asphalt becomes after a day of drizzling

rain which freezes as it falls, you can form no idea of the peril to your horses and yourself of driving even a few squares. We took Grymes on the box (for Aunt Oglethorpe wished him to look after Barbara and me, later, at the President's), and by rare good luck we got up to Mrs. Cadwallader's door without having our horses fall. There had been, as we heard later, a dreadful jam of carriages at the church; but there was nothing of the sort on Connecticut Avenue, and we made our way downstairs from the dressing-room very easily. The pretty little bride — for she was hardly more than a débutante — and her circle of bridesmaids with their deftly shaded colors were an artistic picture enough, and the parlors were brilliant with the uniforms of army and navy officers, diplomats in all their bravery of orders; for nearly every one of these was going later to the President's party, where, of course, full dress was *en règle*. It is but seldom, you know, that one sees the Diplomatic Corps in their court dress, and there is always a novelty and charm about it as seen in contrast with the sober black coat

that is the garb of an American citizen even at balls.

I had a very pleasant hour at the wedding, chiefly with the foreigners, however; for there were several other parties, which with three large dinners took off the Washington men, and I did not see Mr. Fairfax at all until later, when he rendered me a signal service. Just as we thought it proper to take leave, the same idea appeared to strike most of the guests simultaneously; and as there seemed an equal number of people arriving, those departing were met in the hall by a nearly solid phalanx of men and women, and the crowd became for some minutes almost unbearable. I was literally carried off my feet by the pressure behind me, and I threw my arm around Kitty, fearing her little person would be trampled underfoot. Barbara was just behind, her train thrown over her arm, to preserve the lace upon it from going to tatters. She, like myself, was indebted to her height on that occasion; but a lady behind us fainted, another just in front went off into a state of semi-unconsciousness, and for a second I was terribly

frightened lest I might be guilty of following their example. The musicians were playing stolidly on, and there seemed no chance of our ever reaching the staircase, when, in the opposing current, I became aware of Alan Fairfax's eyes seeking mine with an expression of the greatest concern. He contrived in some way to reach me, and in a moment more he had motioned me to slip under the arm of the burly musician who stood, with his violoncello, in the doorway of a small room at the left. I pushed Kitty inside the room in advance of us, and Barbara followed; we all three gasped for breath and then began to laugh.

"Are you all right?" asked Mr. Fairfax, over the musician's shoulder; "it's a relief to hear you laugh! I thought you were going to faint five seconds ago. Good Heavens, what a crush this is!"

"Did you ever know anything so stupid?" said Kitty, recovering herself. "If everybody had not been insane enough to push, we could have gotten out all right; for you can see that the parlor behind us is barely full, not at all uncomfortably crowded."

"You have added one more Washington experience to your list, Miss Oglethorpe," said Mr. Fairfax. "I hope you ladies came out without damage to your gowns."

"We are in a good state of preservation," said Barbara; "and, oh, Dolly, there is Grymes actually inside the hall door. He looks like an anchor, does n't he? Mr. Fairfax, do telegraph across the heads and ask if our carriage be anywhere within reach. I am tempted to go to it without trying to ascend through that perilous hall and stairway in search of our wraps."

"It 's not so bad now," said Kitty, venturing to place herself outside the threshold of our refuge. "Grymes signals assent, Barbara. Now for a push! May we offer you a seat, Mr. Fairfax, by way of proving our gratitude?"

"Thank you, no," said he. "I have but just arrived, and must have a few words with our hostess and the bride before going to the President's. *Au revoir*, then, Miss Oglethorpe; did I not prophesy that you would revolve without stopping until midnight on Mardi Gras?"

So, in a few minutes, Laura, we were off again,

thanks to Grymes's invaluable strategy, and rolling down to the Executive Mansion. No fear of too great a crowd there, I found, and the scene was enchanting. The flowers, the plants, in profusion, the glorious music of the Marine Band, the brilliant uniforms and court dresses, the exquisite toilettes of the women, and the long cool conservatories, lighted with softly shaded lights, — all formed as perfect a picture of a party as any girl could desire. But, oh, Laura, I came to grief in those same alluring conservatories; and it was all my own fault, too, for behaving so badly at the Legation.

Of course it was the Hon. Geoff; you perhaps guess what was coming better than I did. Not that I am by any means more unconscious of a man's liking than most girls, but simply because on that particular evening I was thinking of something else, and was tired, — yes, absolutely, for once, tired out. I went for a walk among the palms, and, lo! almost before I quite heard the full significance of his words, Mr. Ormond was asking me to be his wife. He was so manly and straightforward about it that

I felt something choking in my throat, and before I knew it my eyes were quite brimful of tears.

I don't know what I said, (does any girl *ever* know, I wonder?) but I implored him to stop, and he got me a chair in a quiet nook, and — like the gentleman he is — walked off a few paces until I got my voice under control again.

"*Don't* look so wretched," said I, when he came back in response to my signal; "I sha'n't try to tell you half how sorry I am that the answer must be no."

He looked at me for a moment, — I had no idea that the gay, careless Englishman's face could change to so much sadness, — and then he said, "May I ask you one question without impertinence? Is Arthur Harcourt the lucky fellow whom I must envy all my life?"

"Arthur Harcourt!" echoed I, in utter amazement (for, indeed, Laura, I had no idea that anybody knew of Arthur's nonsense about me last year in London; although people did say we were engaged on the other side, I never imagined it had reached here); "why should you

fancy such a thing? We are the best of friends — and *only* that."

His face brightened; evidently Arthur had been a bugbear to him. "Do not forbid me to hope then," he said earnestly; "if you are not *already* won, no man will try harder to win you than I."

For the first — and I trust the *last* — time in my life, I became one mass of blushes; the blood fairly tingled in my finger-tips as I met his eye. "Mr. Ormond," said I, desperately, "please take me out of this conservatory before I make a howling idiot of myself. You must consider my reply as final, but — but — I am perfectly unstrung, as you see, and I beg you to be generous enough to take me back to Mrs. Bellair and let us talk of something else."

He offered me his arm without another word, and I felt such genuine respect and pity for him, with regret at my own folly, that I was very near revoking my sentence on the spot — to bitter repentance afterward, had I followed my impulse. So we got back into the lights and the music again; and just as I emerged from the scene of

my unhappy adventure, I saw Mr. Fairfax with Mrs. Tremaine on his arm go through the hall in the direction of the conservatories.

In two seconds, Laura, I was myself again; a good healthy rage always restores my mental equilibrium, and by the time we found Kitty I am sure Mr. Ormond thought me thoroughly heartless, and perhaps his cure began. Barbara was not to be found for some minutes; but as I did not propose to have Alan Fairfax come and seek me after his conversation with Mrs. Tremaine should be concluded, I whispered to Kitty that I was tired, and that clever young matron, perceiving that something had gone awry, kindly consented to order the carriage. As we came out into the vestibule, to my surprise, there stood Mr. Fairfax, as well as the Hon. Geoff.

"Have you just come?" said I, lightly, as I passed him; "you will find it very cool and pleasant in the conservatories. Thanks; Mr. Ormond will take me to the carriage, — good-night."

The carnival lights were growing pale and

dim as we drew up on K Street, and I walked rapidly upstairs and locked myself in my room, feeling that for me Lent had come indeed!

Good-night, Laura. I 'm tired of myself and this long confession, and with dear love am always

Yours penitentially and confidentially!

DOLLY.

LETTER No. VIII.

From Mr. Harry Fitzhugh Oglethorpe, in Cairo, to Miss Judith Randolph, in Washington.

CAIRO, EGYPT, MARCH 1.

MY DEAR JUDITH,

I HOPE you will not be too surprised at receiving this letter. The truth is, that I desire some information which I think you may be able to give me, and I believe that our old friendship holds steadfast enough for me to feel justified in asking your assistance.

To come directly to the point, I want you to write me at once how my wife is, and what she has been doing in Washington this winter.

I can almost see you lay down my letter in utter amazement after reading the last sentence. Naturally you will imagine that I had best ask that question of Barbara herself, — but I cannot. As the envelope that I have just received by the last post, addressed to me in her handwriting,

contains merely a blank sheet of note-paper, you perceive that information from that source is not to be expected!

I begin to fancy (I wish I dared say "hope") that I have made a consummate ass of myself; and as I once gave you a partial confidence on this subject, I will now make it an entire one, and place myself in your kind and friendly hands. Women somehow seem to comprehend each other much better than men can understand them; read my riddle for me if you can.

I told you, at the time, of the story I had heard of Barbara's attachment to Arthur Harcourt, — that, in fact, there had been an unacknowledged engagement between them, and that she was deterred from marrying him only because of the contract which her father's will imposed upon her to become my wife. I did not give you the name of my informant; but no doubt you have long since divined (if you ever thought of it at all) that it was the fair Hungarian with whom for a short time I was so *épris*. It was curious that this story, which no doubt was intended to disenchant me with Barbara,

produced a directly opposite effect. I felt as if I had been robbed of something that lawfully belonged to me, and from that instant to this hour have been beset with a torturing anxiety to possess not only Barbara's hand, but her *entire* heart.

It is a singular thing to me, in looking back, that I failed to discover the state of my own feelings toward her until it was too late. The love was latent; but, believe me, it has always existed since our meeting in New York just after her return from Europe, when I first realized the loveliness of her perfect womanhood.

I went to New York and married her, a prey to the most intense jealousy, and was fool enough to leave her on our wedding-day, and put thousands of miles between us. Each mile that I travelled, however, I felt more bitterly my headlong folly; and now the barrier that my own act has placed between us seems to me to have grown almost unsurmountable. I cannot forget her face, or the look it wore when I told her I was going to Egypt. Her large, pathetic eyes seem to haunt me, and I would give all I possess in

this world could I behold one gleam of love for me in their liquid depths.

Harcourt came to see me when I stopped in London on my way out; but I declined to see him, as I did not feel that I could keep up a decent semblance of friendliness if we met. I did think, one morning, of going to call on the De Peysters (they are dear and intimate friends of my wife and her cousin Dolly); but it never occurred to me until London was far behind me that very possibly I could have arrived at the truth of that story by adroit questioning of Laura, and you may set that down as another of my lost opportunities.

And now, Judith, you can perhaps understand something of my position. I have not dared to write Barbara since I left her, for we parted in anger, and with bitterness on both sides. I feel now that my hasty action was a grave error, and yet I know not how to repair it. If her heart belongs to another, I had no right to marry her without asking her the question; having married her, it was both cruel and unkind to leave her as I did. And yet I hesitate to say all this to

Barbara; I confess myself a coward when I think of our position toward each other. Do you think I could ever induce her to believe that mad jealousy was the cause of my conduct, — in short, that I crave no boon so entirely as her love?

Aunt Oglethorpe writes me that Barbara and Dolly are much admired in Washington, and that you are becoming very intimate with them, especially with my wife. This has given me courage to write you, for I must have some intelligence of Barbara soon. Tell me how she is, how she looks, whether men follow her and admire her exquisite beauty, — in fact, tell me all you can think of that her husband longs to know, and above all, whether she ever speaks of me.

I make no apology for asking this of you. I know your brave, kind heart too well to suppose that you will not feel for the misery that I am suffering, and seek to alleviate it if it be in your power.

With all kind remembrance of days "lang syne," I am

Faithfully your friend,

H. F. OGLETHORPE.

LETTER No. IX.

From Mrs. Harry Fitzhugh Oglethorpe, in Washington, to Miss Katrine Suydam, in New York.

1700 K STREET, MARCH 13.

MY DEAR KATRINE,

YOUR last letter looks at me reproachfully from the leaves of my portfolio, and no doubt you are wondering at my silence. The truth is, I am not very well; I think the gay life of the season was a little too much for me. Very possibly it might not have been if I had possessed a mind at ease, but my constant anxiety about Harry is beginning to tell upon me. My thoughts revolve in a circle; do you wonder that my brain grows giddy at times as I strive in vain to penetrate into my future?

One mystery is solved for me, however, and I am contradictory enough to wish it had remained untold. The woman whom Harry loved — nay, loves still, alas! — is the girl in whom

I have taken such deep interest, — Judith Randolph.

Are you surprised, Katrine? I have a curious feeling, as if I had known it all along; and the certainty is so painful that I almost wish I could go back to my half-formed suspicions.

I do not know whether Aunt Oglethorpe was aware of this (and I cannot bring myself to ask her); but the fact was communicated to me by Madame de Vocqsal in a manner that did her little credit, and she thereby betrayed her animosity toward me to several others who heard her remark. How that woman does hate me! Some day I may perhaps discover why.

Try, as I do, to remain the same in my manner and my feelings toward Judith, I fear I am not as successful as I could desire. I trust I have too much justice to blame her for what most assuredly she cannot help, nor can I wonder at Harry's admiration for so charming and interesting a creature. That Judith loves him, however, I can hardly believe; certainly not now, whatever she may have done formerly. Her eyes are too frank, as they look into mine, to be hiding

such a secret; it is not *in* her to be false. And, moreover, unless my knowledge of human nature is less than I suppose it to be, Judith is falling quietly but hopelessly in love, day by day, with the man who haunts her like her shadow, — the Austrian Count, of whom I wrote you in one of my previous letters. Under all her bright, *insouciant* gayety I can discern a little of the struggle that is going on in her heart, and I find myself wondering whether the Count will some day cut the Gordian knot for her as well as himself. My observations of Judith have been favored by the circumstance that she is one of a few amateurs who have in hand the production of a play to be given after Easter. Dolly has also consented to take part in it. Mr. Fairfax is stage manager, and the Count has, with Judith, the principal part. The play is that pretty one called "A Branch of Roses," and is laid in Huguenot days, — rather a difficult play for a party of amateurs perhaps; but there is a great deal of talent displayed in their ranks, and as I have, on several occasions, been prompter at the rehearsals, I have grown deeply interested in the suc-

cess of the play, although the drama in real life that they are unconsciously acting at the same time is, of course, the most attractive of all.

There has been a good deal going on in a social way; indeed, the more quiet receptions, small breakfasts, and theatre parties that are considered to have the proper Lenten shade, are to me more agreeable than the rush and whirl of the season. We see more of the Washington residents, and less of the strangers, who, being mostly birds of passage, are now winging their flight toward Fortress Monroe and Florida, to return, very possibly, for the short Easter season which we are sure to have, as this is the year of the long session. I am anxious to see Washington in her spring garb of green. Kitty tells me it is most beautiful, and I can well imagine that the parks and wide streets will look their best in the soft April sunshine. I have had several horseback rides already; for although March, we often have warm, bright days, just fitted for such exercise. Dolly and I have gone out with Mr. Ormond and Count Lennartsôhn as escorts; and I forget my troubles when in the saddle, for I

have Lady Di here — bless her! — and a good gallop shakes off, for a little at least, some of the care that oppresses me.

I wrote you that Dolly had full occupation with her brace of lovers; but since then I feel assured that Mr. Ormond may be counted out of the race, although he still continues to haunt the house and sees nearly as much of Dolly as during the season. I cannot quite understand Mr. Fairfax. He certainly has himself well in hand, for Dolly has developed the most teasing and aggravating propensities of late; her capacities in that line are very amusing — to me. What they may be to Mr. Fairfax he wisely keeps to himself, though I confess *I* have longed to shake her several times within the past week. With all her capriciousness there is that indescribable drollery and sense of humor which half disarms one. I have seen her eyes dance with mischief when she had said some exquisitely provoking thing to him; and, lo! the man contrives to return the javelin with a delicacy of touch that hits precisely as she did — and no more. We do not talk much of Mr. Fairfax nowadays. Even in our

nightly *séances*, when the feminine mind is most prone to confidence (for some occult reason, that seems allied with what is familiarly known as "taking down" one's hair), we carefully avoid that subject. I never knew Dolly so cautious; and begin to suspect her of being in the position of the proverbial woman who hesitates!

MARCH 22.

This letter is still in my desk, dear Katrine, but it was not possible to finish and send it off before. I was interrupted at that very point where I broke off so abruptly by a request from Dolly that I would please descend to the drawing-room and play prompter; and of course I went and witnessed a rehearsal between Dolly, the Count, and Judith. Mr. Fairfax came in before it had concluded, and stayed for a cup of tea brewed by dear aunt, which she always takes great pleasure in making for him, as he happens to be a prime favorite of hers.

Among aunt's guests that evening, enjoying to the utmost the rehearsal and the tea, was the dignified, handsome, and genial Mr. Corcoran, Washington's noted philanthropist. You have

often heard of him, Katrine; but I wish you could see him, as well as the noble benefactions that have connected his name for all time with our Capital City. Beside a multitude of private charities, of which the world will never know, he has given to Art the fine gallery which bears his name; to the aged, a Ladies' Home, that is, to them, a veritable haven of rest; and to the dead, the beautiful cemetery of Oak Hill, where next summer he brings "home" the poet, John Howard Payne. Mr. Corcoran goes out in society but seldom now; but when he does appear, Washingtonians feel that he confers at once an honor and a pleasure. We have been fortunate enough to see him more familiarly; for he is an old and valued friend of Aunt Oglethorpe's, and frequently comes to play his favorite game of whist in her drawing-room.

Judith, who is the "star" of the whole play, and who acts with an *abandon* and pathos of which I hardly fancied her capable, had rehearsed twice a very difficult passage with the Count before Mr. Fairfax's critical taste was satisfied. At the conclusion, when tea was being

served, she left the group near Aunt Oglethorpe's little tea-table and seated herself by me, in a recess of the drawing-room where hangs a famous Guido. As I told you, I am conscious of a certain restraint with Judith since the apple of knowledge was offered me by that wily Madame de Vocqsal; but I had determined to fight against it, and I think I received her with almost my former cordiality.

She was looking very lovely that night; the excitement of the rehearsal had brought the deeper rose tint to her face which always accentuates her beauty, and I could not help saying so, though not quite in those words. She thanked me in her graceful fashion, and then began talking of the play.

"We are getting down to the business of it, are we not?" said she. "Count Lennartsôhn is extremely provoking, because he *will not* give my 'cues.' I am actually obliged to learn his part as well as my own, or I should be hopelessly adrift. If he wished to say, 'My face is above my fortunes, I am a gentleman,' he would present it to me somewhat after this manner:

'My fortunes, madam, are above my face; I am a gentleman, believe me!' Even Shakspeare would not be sacred from his irresistible propensity to render the substance of his part in just a little different language from the author's! How can I be exact with such an aggravating companion?"

"While Mr. Fairfax, with praiseworthy patience, insists upon the text," said I, laughing; "to my surprise, Dolly is the most exact of you all."

"Yes," said Judith, "when I get carried away with my part I am prone to make occasional lapses, I confess; but at least give me credit for ending on the correct word, and not discomfiting my fellow actors. Is this Miss Oglethorpe's first attempt at private theatricals? If so, she plays remarkably well. We Washington girls have had long experience in this line, and yet I doubt if I know any one who could play that special part with such spirit."

"Dolly never attempted it but once before," said I. "That was in England. We were spending some days at Lady Harcourt's seat in

Devonshire, — Ruthyne, — and Arthur thought proper to have a play. I remember it particularly well, because it was those unlucky theatricals which brought poor Arthur to such grief with Dolly; he had been desperately in love with her for months, but this was the climax."

The most singular look flashed over Judith's face. I have been pondering about it since, and can only describe it by saying that she looked as if an anxiety had been lifted off her suddenly, and at the same time gave me a glance of surprised uncertainty. At the moment I interpreted it to mean astonishment at my revealing one of Dolly's love affairs; so I hastened to add, —

"You look so surprised! It is no secret that Arthur Harcourt wanted to marry Dolly; very possibly you may not have heard it, however. We know him and all his family so intimately that I forgot for the moment that they are strangers to you, though probably you may know of Arthur from Mr. Fairfax."

"Yes," she answered, "and I once met Mr. Harcourt when he came across two years ago

and spent a month with Mr. Fairfax. Pray excuse me, and do not set my question down to idle curiosity, but — was Miss Oglethorpe ever reported engaged to him?"

She looked so eager, and (oddly enough) so happy about some thought in her own mind, that I instantly suspected her of being Alan Fairfax's *confidante*, and I hastened to assure her, in the most positive manner, that although such a report had crept out in London there was not, and never had been, any truth in it whatever. When I paused she turned toward me, laid her hand on mine, and said, with a sweet upward glance that gave me a half-pang as I acknowledged its charm, —

"Thank you so much for telling me the exact truth. You do not know — and I cannot tell you — how much of happiness and relief your reply to my question may bring."

So you see, Katrine, that I am right, and no doubt Mr. Fairfax has heard some exaggerated story about Dolly and Arthur. Was it not kind of Judith? I am singularly attracted to that girl, even while the thought of Harry's passion

for her imbitters every moment that I spend in her society.

The next morning, after attending early service at St. John's with me, Dolly took the carriage to drive down town to execute some errands for Aunt Oglethorpe, and I went for a stroll up Connecticut Avenue. On my way home, crossing Farragut Square, I saw a well-known figure a few paces in front of me, and quickening my steps touched Judith on the arm.

"Are you coming to see me?" said I, "or has there been another rehearsal arranged for this morning that Dolly has failed to understand?" And then, as I glanced at her face, I dropped my hand and confronted her with astonishment as well as alarm. Every particle of her lovely bloom seemed to have left her, as by magic; her eyes had great circles drawn by pain beneath them, and her pretty pale lips strove vainly for a ghost of her usual smile as she answered me.

"I am on my way to your house," she said; "I want to see Madam Oglethorpe as soon as possible." Then she glanced at me, and no doubt, seeing the concern upon my face which

her changed appearance had drawn forth, she added with a brave little laugh: "I — I — have had rather a shock this morning, Mrs. Oglethorpe, and have not had time to recover from it. The truth is"— a tear started down her cheek, which she impatiently brushed away — "the truth is, I have lost my office."

"Lost what?" said I, a little bewildered, and drawing her hand through my arm as we walked on in the direction of Aunt Oglethorpe's.

"My office," said Judith, recovering herself somewhat, "my place in the Department. I have been fearing it — no one knows how terribly! — for some months, for I am not upon what is called the 'permanent roll.' And on my going to my desk this morning, there lay one of those fateful yellow envelopes, informing me that as larger appropriations have not yet been made, the Department has no further need for my services."

"But, my dearest girl," cried I, pushing past Grymes as he opened the door for us, and fairly dragging Judith up the staircase to the library, "this cannot be right. There is surely some

mistake; you cannot lose a position all in a moment, can you? I thought there was so much 'red tape' surrounding everything the Government has to do with."

"Not with a poor Department clerk," said Judith, bitterly. "The execution is immediate; we have no long-drawn pangs at the moment of it. Perhaps that is because we endure so many beforehand."

"This cannot be allowed," said I, vehemently, as the thought that this salary was Judith's all crossed my mind; "let me do something for you. Cannot I go to the Secretary, or the President — or somebody?"

Judith smiled; a look of positive amusement shot across her pale face. "You do not understand it," she said. "I could not get back *this* place in any event, for the *corps* detailed for this special work has been reduced, and until Congress makes further appropriations the Department has plenty of clerks for the work on hand. No, dear Mrs. Oglethorpe, the only thing that can be done for me, and for which I am here to ask your dear aunt's assistance, is to make

application for another appointment upon the permanent roll, which, if I can secure, is less liable to sudden reduction of the force, although it does occur, of course. And I should not be here now — for I fear I am almost imposing upon Madam Oglethorpe's past kindness to us — but that mamma is not so well, and I *dare* not take home this intelligence to her." And then Judith snatched her hand from mine, and quivered from head to foot with suppressed anguish.

Katrine, I cannot tell you how deeply I was distressed. It was not only that it was a young and beautiful woman whom unhappy Fate had brought to fight her way single-handed in the battle of life, but there stood before me some one whom Harry loved; can I not imagine the pang it would have given him to see her thus? In one second every unkind thought concerning her fled from my mind. We were but woman to woman, after all; why should I be unjust or ungenerous to her because she had won his love and I had failed?

"Judith!" I cried, for once feeling one of Dolly's swift impulses, and recognizing that I,

too, share the hot Oglethorpe blood, "we will do all and everything we can, dear girl. And in the mean time, while you are waiting for employment, do not refuse me the pleasure that it will give me to be your banker. What is money, after all, but an accidental inheritance, and why should friends make such demur about accepting it from one another? I have far, far more of it than I know what to do with; let me have the genuine pleasure of feeling that to somebody my wealth is a blessing — not a curse!"

Judith put both her hands in mine, and the look she gave me! If ever there was love and pure gratitude, it looked out of her beautiful eyes into mine just then. "You are an angel!" she said; "nay, what is better for practical purposes and every-day life, a perfect gentlewoman. Dear Mrs. Oglethorpe, I do not know how to thank you adequately, and I can never forget your noble and generous offer. I have enough for present needs, thank God; my aunt in New York sent me a check yesterday. But I will take your help as frankly as you have offered it; if I really need it, I will come to you, for

mamma must not be allowed to suffer, even if my pride does. And besides," smiling her old, brave, bright smile, and looking as if the shadows were rolling away, "I ran over to see Mrs. Bellair before coming here, and she kindly promised to let me teach Donny French and Latin three days in the week, and the generous terms she made will help me greatly."

Grymes came back to say that Aunt Oglethorpe would see Judith, and I took her to the morning-room, and sat down to ponder over plans for her in the library. Presently Dolly came back, and waxed hotly indignant when I told her of Judith's misfortune. She proposed that I should take Judith home in the carriage, and when, at the conclusion of half an hour, Judith appeared, I told her that I intended so doing.

"Indeed, I shall be very glad to ride," said she, simply. "The excitement of the morning has been very fatiguing, and I feel as if I could not walk. Besides, I very *much* prefer Madam Ogle thorpe's comfortable carriage to the Avenue cars Is it not provoking to have all the loves an

aspirations of the purples, and yet to find that one's niche in life is clothed with homespun ?"

In that half-hour, Katrine, this marvellous girl had recovered her courage again, and was really as bright and brave as she seemed, talking most charmingly and cheerfully to me all the way to her own door. Judith is at once an enigma and a reproach to me; would that I could bear my troubles with the spirit and fortitude which she displays!

When we drew up on F Street, I saw that a doctor's gig was standing in front of the door. Judith perceived it almost as quickly as I had done, and with a frightened "It's Dr. Ames; oh, I am so afraid mamma has one of her dreadful attacks," she flew into the house. After a moment's hesitation I followed, thinking that I might possibly be of service, and, moreover, being anxious to know how Mrs. Randolph was. I walked into the front room, which was used as a parlor and which I thought at that hour would probably be vacant, to wait until I could see Judith again. A gentleman turned from the window as I came in; but I did not glance at

him (thinking it was one of the other inmates of the house) until a familiar voice said, "Good-morning, Mrs. Oglethorpe," and looking up I beheld Count Lennartsôhn.

"You here!" said I, in the greatest surprise.

"And why not?" said he, looking much amused, as we shook hands. "I came to leave a message about our next rehearsal for Miss Randolph, forgetting that she is never at home until after four o'clock; and as I arrived on the doorstep, I met the doctor, who tells me that Mrs. Randolph is extremely ill. I am waiting to learn whether she is less suffering; you know she is subject to spasms of the heart."

A sudden impulse (which I am now convinced was an inspiration) overcame my usual prudence, and, motioning the Count to sit beside me, I proceeded to tell him of Judith's having just lost her place in the Department, and how deeply I was interested to procure her another. He looked extremely agitated as my story of the morning was repeated, and finally sprang from his chair with an excited exclamation.

"*Mon Dieu!* this must not be. Do you tell

me that she has nothing, absolutely? that she must always work like this?"

"Did you not know it?" I said; "she makes no secret of her employment."

"I suppose I must have heard it," said he, walking to and fro uneasily; "but it had passed from my mind. I knew that she was not rich, but one cannot connect the idea of exertion with so fair and brilliant a being! I cannot support the thought that she should be living in this suspense, indebted to chance for the privilege of working for her mother and herself. Mrs. Oglethorpe," — returning to my side with a look of resolution that became his handsome face and spirited movements, — "you must see how it is with me. Can I — dare I imagine that I have made her care for me? Do you think she would consent to come to me? As my wife, there should be no more care for her."

He rolled out the words with more of a foreign accent than is usual with him, as his English is extremely good. Can you imagine, Katrine, my delight at the triumph of love over a *mariage de convenance?*

"That is a question which you must ask of Judith alone," said I. "I can only say one little word, — try! Hush! here she comes;" and there stood Judith in the doorway.

"She is better," said she, eagerly, not perceiving the Count, who stood somewhat in the shadow of the curtains. "It was not as bad an attack as the last, the doctor tells me, and I am so relieved. Think what it would have been to come home as I was when I met you this morning and find — Count, I beg your pardon; I did not perceive that you were in the room."

There were traces of tears on her delicate cheeks, her hair had become slightly loosened, and two or three dainty curls had escaped and stolen down the curve of her white throat; never had she looked so lovely, or so pathetic. It carried the Count quite out of his usual composed *savoir-faire*, and he took her hand impetuously.

"It is no time to speak now, perhaps," he said, "when your mother is so ill and you are agitated with other cares; but Mrs. Oglethorpe has bid me 'try.' Judith, will you listen to me?"

Mrs. Oglethorpe contrived to reach that door more swiftly than she ever swept out of a room before, I assure you! Human nature could not refrain from a backward glance, however; and as I closed the door, I saw the glad, bright light flash over Judith's face that told the old, old story as it comes to us straight from the Garden of Eden; the one sole inheritance that still carries a breath of Paradise upon its wings.

I rode home, Katrine, in a state of such genuine pleasure as has long been unknown to me. And I registered a vow that, my first effort having been so successful at match-making, I would never essay another, lest unkind Fortune turn her face from me on a second occasion.

I communicated the secret to Dolly, who fairly bounded out of her chair with delight; but of course we neither of us dared hint of the matter to any one until we heard from Judith. And the next morning, bright and early, she appeared, all dimpling smiles and gay sallies, to tell Aunt Oglethorpe of her engagement to the Count. It will not be announced, however, until after Easter, as Mrs. Randolph is in such precarious

health, and Judith wishes to "have the play over," she says, "before coming down to the realities of life."

Write me soon again, my dearest Katrine. I feel to-day in much better spirits than for months. Perhaps it is a reflection of Judith's happiness, or, more truly, a sense of having achieved a victory over myself. Do you think that perhaps now Harry — I cannot write the half-formed thought. You, who are my other self, in the friendship of years, may divine it, and will not think me weak, but only a woman with an aching heart.

Adieu. Perhaps Easter may bring me something of hope and peace.

Devotedly yours,

BARBARA OGLETHORPE.

LETTER No. X.

From Miss Judith Randolph, in Washington, to Mr. Harry Fitzhugh Oglethorpe, in Cairo.[1]

2030 F Street, April 4.

My dear Harry,

I can hardly tell whether your letter caused me most pleasure or pain; but that I was glad to receive it you cannot, I hope, doubt. I am gratified that you remember our old friendship enough to ask so small a service, while pained that the cause for it should exist. At the same time, I promise to do all that I can do to assist you; for your wife, Harry Oglethorpe, is one of the sweetest, noblest women that ever lived, and I have grown to love her most tenderly.

I have always supposed that men share one characteristic with the bat tribe, — their blindness! — and you certainly seem destined to prove

[1] Owing to a mistake in the address, this letter was six weeks overdue before it reached Mr. Oglethorpe.

my theory. Oh, Harry, was ever man so hot-headed, so thoroughly foolish, as you have been? I am so indignant with you that I would be half inclined to leave you awhile longer in suspense about Barbara by way of just retribution, but that I long to bring peace and happiness back to her once more; for if you fancy you have suffered, what do you suppose has been her share of the burden?

It was so like you to fly into one of your impetuous fits of unreasoning jealousy that I almost smiled, involuntarily, at the thought of it. Did it never once occur to you as just possible that your Hungarian friend may have arranged the little story with which she regaled you to suit her own purpose, and that there was some mistake in the matter? Being a man, you will probably give her the benefit of the doubt. As a woman, I do nothing of the kind; and, thank Heaven! I am in a position to give you most positive assurance that it is Dolly Oglethorpe and not your wife to whom Mr. Harcourt was reported engaged, and with whom he has been desperately in love for two years.

I cannot tell you how happy it makes me to be able to throw light upon the matter for you thus. The explanation is perfectly simple; the cousins bear the same name, both are beauties, and both intimate friends of the Harcourt family. My only wonder is that this solution did not occur to you long ago. If you had confided your suspicions to your aunt, Madam Oglethorpe, I feel quite certain that she would in some way have ascertained the truth for you. But it is useless to speculate upon that branch of the subject; the very best and most sensible thing that you can do at present is to take passage in the next steamer for home, and say for yourself to your wife all that you have written to me about her.

You will naturally desire to know how this knowledge of the matter came to my ears. Not from Dolly; no, it was Barbara herself, who in the most unconscious manner spoke of the report, *apropos* to some amateur theatricals with which we are now tormenting ourselves and our friends. I was so surprised and delighted with what she said that I almost feared she would sus-

pect some hidden motive in the questions I put to her; but, for some reason, she appeared totally unsuspicious, and I have allowed her to remain so. Truth to tell, at the exact moment that I had the conversation with her to which I refer, Barbara had been displaying much coldness and restraint toward me, and I was at the point of asking an explanation when, the day following, to my great relief, the barrier was broken down.

You ask me all manner of questions regarding her, and expect me, no doubt, to answer each and all of them! I shall do nothing of the kind; as I told you, you deserve condign punishment, and I mean you to have a taste thereof. Jesting aside, my dear Harry, I wish I could give you an affirmative reply to your question whether she ever speaks of you. She has never done so voluntarily, and upon the two occasions when I mentioned you, during our first acquaintance, she replied with such extreme coldness that continuing the subject became an impossibility.

Do not, however, be downcast because of this. Being a woman, and somewhat versed in the wiles and subterfuges of my sex, I can tell you

that I consider it a much surer sign of her regard than her indifference. I should not be surprised to find that she loves you with the whole strength of her nature, for if ever I saw a woman whose haunting sorrow seems to linger in the depths of her soft eyes, it lies in those of your wife. It adds a subtle charm to her beauty, but to a keen observer it brings a pang as well.

You ask me whether she is admired. Of course she is; we have had nothing half so attractive in Washington for some years as herself and Dolly. Perhaps one secret of it is that they are such a perfect contrast in manner as well as appearance. Barbara's cold, calm stateliness is a perfect foil to her cousin's brilliant, bright gayety; and the affection that exists between them is patent to everybody, and perhaps gives them an additional attraction.

I must confess that I was strongly tempted to give your letter to Barbara; but, reflecting that "fools rush in where angels fear to tread," I forbore. If, however, any unforeseen contingency arises in which I should deem that I assisted your cause by so doing, I trust, my dear Harry, that

you will not hold it as any breach of confidence on my part? I think you meant to give me discretionary powers, did you not? and, if so, will believe that I shall endeavor not to misuse them.

There is no room on this over-crowded sheet to give you personal intelligence of myself; and as I am perfectly certain that the main subject of my letter fulfils your desires, I will only add that we are well, — meaning mamma and me. Of course, mamma's health is always a matter of uncertainty; but as I am, at present, very happy, that fact tends toward making her feel brighter and more like herself. If there be a shadow of an enigma in that last sentence, I will promise to solve it when I see you on this side the Atlantic; and I feel sure that this letter will probably give you the desired impetus homeward.

Hoping, then, to see you very soon at home, and with all good wishes for you and that dear, beautiful Barbara, I am

Yours most faithfully,

JUDITH RANDOLPH.

LETTER No. XI.

From Mr. Alan Fairfax, in Washington, to Mr. Arthur Harcourt, in London.

METROPOLITAN CLUB, APRIL 20.

MY DEAR HARCOURT,

YOU will, no doubt, be surprised at another letter following my last of the 20th of March so speedily; but that related to business matters, while this is purely personal, though I cannot deny that business has some finger in it.

We are at present deeply engaged in the production of an amateur play, a matter much more in your line than my own; and I confess I have frequently wished for you in the perplexing, conflicting, and generally trying *rôle* of stage manager to a party of non-professionals. It is announced for the week after Easter, and I presume we shall come out all right and filled with triumph from the chaos which at this moment envelops my *corps dramatique.*

Miss Oglethorpe and Miss Judith Randolph (whom you will remember meeting, perhaps, two years ago?) are the principal characters, and are full of enthusiasm about the matter. I don't wonder, for I am sometimes astonished myself at the ease and grace with which they act at the rehearsals. They have an able assistant, however, in the person of Lennartsôhn, of the Austrian Legation, who is really a marvel for an amateur, although lately I have my suspicions that the little blind god has something to do with the ardor of his part when rehearsing with Miss Randolph.

But I am filling my letter with matter quite foreign to the real object of it; for the first time in my life, Arthur, I hesitate to speak to you on a subject of delicacy to us both. Will you allow me to ask you, in all earnestness and good faith, whether you have ever been engaged to Miss Oglethorpe, and, if not, whether you still enroll yourself as one of the candidates for her favor.

Of course my question is open to but one interpretation; the fact being that I have found

a woman who compels me, half against my will, to adore her! The absurd part of it is that I entered the lists with my eyes wide open. I saw and confessed her indescribable fascination from the first, and yet, with the usual folly of mankind, considered myself proof against it. To what pass am I brought when I not only see my own defeat, but am not in the least ashamed of it! Verily you will say that, like Falstaff, I "have drunk medicines."

Whether I have a chance or not, you know at this hour, as well as I do. Every device that a woman free from coquetry (except of the most playful kind) can employ to tease and torment me, she resorts to with an amount of ingenuity that sometimes nearly provokes my laughter. Perhaps it is as well for me that she throws up such *cheveux de frise;* for on the rare occasions when she grows gentle, she becomes utterly irresistible, because of the seductive contrast to her usual spirit and fire. As you see, I am very far gone indeed; pray write at once and let me feel that if we must be rivals for this woman we are still, as always, friends.

It occurs to me that you may imagine that I have paused before determining to offer myself to Miss Oglethorpe because of the fact — which is patent — that I am not over-endowed with this world's goods, while she has a sufficiency thereof. On the contrary, though I shall, no doubt, be credited with a love for her fortune as well as herself, that consideration has no more weight with me than I fancy it would carry with her. Of course it would be pleasanter the other way; but why, in the name of the common-sense of the enlightened nineteenth century, should the fact of "the balance of [moneyed] power" deter me from making the woman I love my wife, provided I can win her and make her happy?

I am reminded by the clock on my mantel that the hour for another of our play's rehearsals has gone by these fifteen minutes, and that unless I intend to encounter a lively war of words from the very person I am writing about, it becomes me to take my hat and proceed to that rehearsal at once.

I shall post this on the way down town, to

catch the Wednesday's steamer if possible; and I confess I shall await your reply with more impatience than usually characterizes me. I wish you were here, old fellow. Questions such as these are far easier asked than written, I find.

Faithfully yours,

ALAN FAIRFAX.

LETTER No. XII.

From Mrs. Harry Fitzhugh Oglethorpe, in Washington, to Miss Katrine Suydam, in New York.

1700 K STREET, MAY 2.

MY DEAR KATRINE,

I FULLY intended going on to see you in person before writing again; but, as I telegraphed you at the time, I could not accept your delightful invitation for the reason that the much-talked-of play was just about being produced. Since then I have, after long reflection, concluded that I will not leave Washington for the present, much as I would like to do so. This place of my banishment (so to speak) is becoming pleasanter to me than I could ever have supposed possible when I recall the horror I had of it before I came; and, moreover, as Harry "desired" me to stay here, *here* I intend to remain. He makes no sign; indeed, of late, his letters to Aunt Oglethorpe have been fewer than usual, and I can

see she is somewhat troubled by it. The reports in the newspapers of Arabi Pasha's movements, and the general ferment that seems to prevail in Egypt alarm me excessively. Both Dolly and Aunt Oglethorpe treat the idea of there being any danger for the Europeans as absurd; but I think Dolly is more uneasy about Harry than she is willing to admit. The last letter which Aunt Oglethorpe received he wrote from Alexandria; and I am glad that his business takes him there, for I feel as if it were safer than Cairo, though it would be hard for me to define why.

I am glad to hear that you are so interested in Judith, and my account of her engagement. We have grown more intimate than ever, and the other day, though I hardly know how it came to pass, we spoke of Harry. Think of my being able to bear *that!* She said but little; yet that little gave me food for reflection, for she laughingly told me that Harry's greatest fault was jealousy, and asked how I managed to cure him of it!

I don't think I made her any reply, for I was

so amazed at the suggestion. I never suspected him of such a trait, and yet it is very possibly true. But how could jealousy have anything to do with his extraordinary conduct? This view brings me no nearer an explanation, for I surely never gave him a shadow of cause.

You see how rapidly I am becoming a person with one idea. Lest I bore you, I will tell you of the play, and what we have been about since I wrote last.

The instant that any one begins to rehearse a play, I believe it is their usual fate to be fallen upon by all the leaders of the fashionable charities, with a request that it should be given for the benefit of "such and such" or "so and so," until the poor players become perfectly bewildered and torn asunder by their amiable desire to accommodate each and all. Kitty gave the casting vote to this one, and it was decided to have the play for the Children's Fresh Air Fund.

That knotty point being settled, Kitty undertook to call upon the different ladies who have the direction of that charity, secure their names and sanction, decide where the play should be

performed, hire the hall, obtain the services of an orchestra, and, in short, oversee the thousand and one details that go to make up the labor of putting an amateur play upon the stage. She would inevitably have been worn to a shadow, Jack assures me, if a brilliant inspiration had not occurred to her at the very beginning, and that was to beseech Mrs. Molyneux and Mrs. Walton to take the play in hand, knowing that under their auspices it would be almost certain to succeed.

Mrs. Molyneux is a woman for whom I have conceived a great liking, and who is a power in herself, socially speaking. Affable to all, she possesses at once keen satire and a fund of humor which make her an inimitable conversationalist; and to say that Mrs. Molyneux has taken a project in hand is almost synonymous with success. So Mrs. Kitty felt very much elated when she announced to Mr. Fairfax that Mrs. Molyneux had kindly assumed the direction of the play; and at the very first rehearsal (which took place at her house) I became convinced that the intricate wheels of private

theatricals would run with the utmost smoothness, influenced by her tact and diplomatic manipulation.

The play was first set for Easter Tuesday, but had to be postponed for a week because Count Lennartsôhn was obliged to take a trip to New York on business; so the girls had ample time to prepare their costumes, which were historically correct, and very quaint and becoming. Dolly's part (that of a maid of honor to Catherine de Médicis) allowed much elegance, and the ruff and coif were strikingly becoming. Of course, Judith was lovely in her plain, prim little Huguenot gown, although Mrs. Molyneux permitted it to be of black velvet, which threw out her Titian-like coloring to the utmost. I was behind the scenes the night of the play, and, oh, the dire confusion that reigned until Mrs. Molyneux and Mrs. Walton appeared, and calmed the troubled waters! Dolly was as near being cross as I ever saw her (for crossness is not one of her small failings); Marian Carey was at the verge of tears because somebody had said she was too much

rouged; and Miss Fitzgerald, who took the part of Dolly's mother, was rapidly succumbing to stage fright. In the midst of this Judith sat calm and undisturbed on top of a trunk, surveying her distracted fellow-beings with serene amusement.

"My dear," said I, as I passed her, with my hands full of stage properties which had been discovered in our dressing-room after poor Mr. Fairfax had been reduced to the verge of despair searching for them, "you have evidently mistaken your vocation! It's comedy, and not pathos!"

"Wait till you see me outside," laughed she, nodding her head in the direction of the orchestra. "Miss Carey, are you ready? They will call you in another moment."

I had been a little anxious, I confess, over Dolly's *début;* but as I stood at the left entrance, during the second scene, Mrs. Molyneux sent me a smiling nod from the opposite side, where she was watching her, that convinced me all was going on well; and the frequent applause from the kindly disposed audience attested the same.

But in the second act an accident occurred which came very near being a most serious affair except for Dolly's quickness and presence of mind.

During this act there is a letter to be burned, lest it should fall into the hands of the queen-mother, and a candle had been lighted and put upon a small table to be ready for Count Lennartsôhn when he needed it for that purpose. Marian Carey and Judith were upon the stage, and the Count was speaking, when Dolly, standing a little in the background, saw, to her horror, that the light muslin fabric of Marian's gown had come in contact with the flame of the candle, as she stood with her back to it, and that a tiny blaze was just catching. Quick as a flash Dolly blew out the candle, and, throwing her arms around the surprised girl, literally crushed out the flame with her fingers and the aid of her heavy velvet gown, against which she held Marian securely. The Count stopped instantly with equal readiness, and motioned to drop the curtain; so, before the audience had fairly seen the occurrence, we were all crowding around Dolly

and Marian to ascertain if they were injured. Mr. Fairfax flew to Dolly's side; and whatever doubt I may have had of his feelings toward her was dispelled when I saw the emotion that flashed over his face as she held out one hand toward him with a little smile, saying,—

"It's nothing much. I think the third finger is the only one that has really suffered."

She was right; but we all saw that it must pain her considerably, and insisted on doing up the hand for her, "artistically," as she said, laughing; and then, when Marian had changed her dress, Dolly insisted upon going on with the play as before. You should have heard the audience applaud when that curtain went up again! The cause of the interruption had crept out, of course, and Dolly, rather to her dismay, found herself a genuine heroine, and shared the honors fully with Judith for the rest of the evening.

The play proved a great success in all respects, and we have by no means done "talking it over" yet, which explains why I am telling you all about it.

Spring, in all its freshness, is fairly upon us,

and Kitty's prophecy about the beauty of the Capital is fully vindicated. I do not wonder that we Northerners are so fascinated with Washington, for it combines so much of picturesqueness in its walks and drives with all that one can desire socially. I am a thorough New Yorker, as you know, and yet I can imagine myself growing very fond of the life and the people here. There is nothing like it on this side the Atlantic, and I think — if Harry were here — that I would be well contented to remain. How I wish he were at home, Katrine! those rumors of war haunt me day and night. I sometimes feel as if I *must* write and ask him to return, and yet — oh! how can I support the humiliation of doing so after the manner of his leaving me?

I begin and end my letter with the same theme. Take my advice, Katrine, and, would you lead an untroubled life, never marry; for if you are happy, I think the ever-haunting terror would be that it might not last, and if you are unhappy — ah! perhaps even then there would be Thekla's consolation, — "I have lived and loved." And to some of us that proves the

lighter sorrow; so you perceive that, after the fashion of our sex, my advice is tempered by contradictions.

Adieu, dear. Dolly sends love, and bids me thank you for your note; her burned hand prevents replying, and she will answer as soon as she can hold a pen comfortably. Always, dearest Katrine,

Devotedly yours,

BARBARA OGLETHORPE.

LETTER No. XIII.

From Mr. Arthur Harcourt, in London, to Mr. Alan Fairfax, in Washington.

No. 29 Arlington Street, Piccadilly,
May 19.

My dear Fairfax,

I have always had the firmest faith in your sense of almost too punctilious honor, and your last letter seems to me sure evidence of my trust. My dear fellow, who but you would have paused before confessing himself to the woman he loves, lest in some way he should be poaching upon my preserves? I wish they *were* mine, Alan, with all my heart; for I tried my very best to make them so and failed.

Set your mind quite at rest for now and always upon the subject of Miss Oglethorpe and myself. We have never been engaged except by unfounded rumor, nor did she in any way coquette with me. I admire her

above all women at this moment; and it is an evidence of her tact and good feeling that our friendship still continues unbroken, notwithstanding that she refused to become my wife.

Go on and win her, Alan, and I wish you happy with all my heart. I have a presentiment that you will be successful, and I assure you that I know of no man to whom I would so willingly hear of her marriage as yourself.

I have some idea of coming across this autumn, and shall certainly do so if there be a chime of wedding-bells to greet me. I suppose that your ideas of the Tyrol for July may have undergone modifications? If not, consider me ready to accompany you.

With best wishes, dear old friend, ever

Yours faithfully,

ARTHUR HARCOURT.

LETTER No. XIV.

From Miss Dolly Oglethorpe, in Washington, to Miss Laura De Peyster, in London.

1700 K STREET, JUNE 3.

MY DEAR LAURA,

THREE times in the past two days have I begun a letter to you, and on each occasion the letter has been consigned to my scrap-basket. Such a waste of material never occurred before in my experience, and the only way to account for this extraordinary conduct on my part is to begin at the very beginning and tell you the whole story.

I shall have to be retrospective in order to do that; but I know your patience and good-nature too well not to believe that you will forgive me — in the end — if I am a little prolix. You perceive the result of spoiling your friends by over-indulgence!

In the first place, I could not write you for two weeks because of my helpless burnt hand;

but you have no doubt received Barbara's note of explanation in regard to that? It is healed now, and the doctor assures me there will not be even a shadow of a scar in a few weeks, although there is a most perceptible one running down my third finger just at present. You cannot think what a dreadful experience it was; not the burning of my hand so much as the terror I felt lest that poor girl should be frightfully injured. I shudder at the remembrance, and feel as if I should forswear theatricals in future because of it.

I had not "half a bad time," as Arthur would say, while I was nursing my hand; for after the first day or two it was not so extremely painful. And people were so kind; all my acquaintances called to inquire for me; I was literally laden with flowers, and one particular bunch of exquisite honeysuckle, such as grows in profusion in the lovely grounds of the Soldiers' Home, came daily, with Mr. Fairfax's card. He had also a nice way of writing a line or two on the said cards; I have kept them all here in my desk.

The only provoking part of my accident was that I was unable to attend two lovely garden-parties and a boat-ride to Mt. Vernon, given by the "Bachelors." But the loss of the latter, at least, was compensated by an invitation from the President (which came, luckily, the very day my bandage was allowed to be dispensed with) to make one of a party down the river on the "Despatch" as far as Mt. Vernon. It was given for a few English notables who have been staying a week or two in Washington, and was one of those charming little private parties which the President knows so well how to make delightful. Barbara, of course, was also invited; and Kitty promised to come for us as early as ten o'clock in the morning, for we had to drive down to the Navy Yard to go on board the "Despatch," and the invitation was for half-past eleven.

The "Despatch" is, as you may know, Laura, a large steam yacht belonging to the Government, in which the President usually takes short sea and river trips, being smaller and better adapted for such excursions than the "Talla-

poosa," which is much larger. I wish you could have seen the party collected at the wharf where the "Despatch" lay, as our carriage drove up. Everybody was full of life and good spirits; there were not more than seventy-five people, all told, and those the most agreeable that could be selected. The day was a perfect one; and as we glided off, slowly, down the river, while the guns on shore fired the salute and the Marine Band was playing on the lower deck, I came to the conclusion that this was the perfection of a trip to the home of Washington.

"Will you come up on deck?" asked the Hon. Geoff, who had assumed possession of my shawl, which I had brought solely to propitiate Kitty, who was always imagining all manner of disasters in the way of taking cold. "Mrs. Oglethorpe is there with Mrs. Walton and Miss Endicott, and it's much the best place to see after we turn the bend in the river."

So I clambered up the ladder-like steps, somewhat awkwardly, for my hand was still too tender to allow of my holding on with it, and I reflected, with a feeling of dismay, I confess,

how on earth I should ever get *down*. At the top, however, a firm hand took hold of my wrist deftly, and Mr. Fairfax greeted me with an exclamation, —

"How did you manage it? You must be a born sailor to accomplish that with one hand." Then in a lower tone, as we followed Mr. Ormond up the deck to greet our host, "I have not seen you since that night of the play. Haven't you a word for me beside 'good-morning'?"

"I am very glad to see you," said I, hastily, being uncomfortably aware that my newly acquired trick of blushing was making me appear absurdly like a school-girl; "and I have never yet thanked you for those exquisite honeysuckles."

"Do not just now," he said quietly. "I have a fresh bunch for you downstairs which I left in charge of the steward."

By this time we had reached the President, and stayed to chat with him a few seconds, during which he made kindly inquiry for my injured hand, and bestowed a charmingly turned

compliment upon the acting of "A Branch of Roses."

And then we sauntered off to join Barbara, and found Mr. Ormond occupying the chair which he assured me he was keeping for me. In a few minutes up came Mrs. Tremaine on Count Lennartsôhn's arm to inquire most anxiously about me; and directly after Mrs. Vandeleur, to whom Mr. Fairfax surrendered his seat, providing himself with a cushion which he placed at Barbara's feet, thus seating himself between us. Barbara was not looking well that day, and I think Mr. Fairfax noticed it. You know there have been all sorts of dreadful rumors from Egypt lately, and between you and me, Laura, I am terribly alarmed for Harry's safety. Barbara does not know it, but Aunt Oglethorpe shares my apprehensions, and she cabled Harry yesterday to return home at once. Whether he will ever receive the telegram or not we cannot tell; but it's a relief to have sent it.

It did not take above two hours to reach Mt. Vernon, and we sat on deck chatting and enjoy-

ing ourselves until the "Despatch" came to anchor at a little distance from the wharf, as the shoal water did not allow of her coming alongside, and the sailors began to run down the launch and barge to take us on shore. The President and his English guests went first, of course, and the rest of us by instalments, until we were all landed, with the exception of some of the chaperons, to whom Mt. Vernon was an old story, and who disliked scrambling down into the boats. It was rather a mooted question between Kitty and Barbara for several seconds whether I was to be allowed to go, on account of the difficulty which attended my climbing; but Mr. Ormond insisted with great eagerness that he would take care of me, and the Count assumed charge of my chaperons; so I declared that I would not be cheated of setting foot on the "sacred soil," and finally succeeded in getting into the barge without accident. In some way Mrs. Tremaine had secured Mr. Fairfax, and they followed us in the launch. I did not think it intentional on his part; but nevertheless I made up *my* mind, Laura, that he should see

as little of me for that day as I could possibly manage!

Of course we had the walk up the hill with the customary pause at the tomb, which is the most simple and unpretending of structures, and — desperately ugly! I would not admit this to Mr. Ormond, however, and we enjoyed a small quarrel all the way up the hill, because he would not admire it. But, oh, Laura, the dear old quaint mansion is simply charming. As we strolled all over it, it filled me with delight, though the most touching associations of all hover around the little low bedroom, above all the others, where Mrs. Washington lived after she became a widow. There is the narrow gabled window from which she could see the old tomb; can you not imagine her sitting there, with the calm serenity which seems the gift of those who grow old, waiting for the summons to join him she loved so well? There is the straight-backed chair in which she sat, the queer little cricket with three legs standing by it, and — most homely of all, yet with an odd touch of pathos mingled with humor — the hole cut in the door

for the cat to come in. It is this dear homelike look about Mt. Vernon which makes its greatest charm; and the nation owes a debt of gratitude to those ladies who have thus preserved the subtle fragrance of the past with a delicacy that is above all praise.

We came down from the little room to find everybody gathered on the lawn, whose beautiful green turf recalls those of England; and presently I strolled off with the Count to the top of the slope. Judith not being of the party, he seemed rather to attach himself to us. You never saw a man so entirely changed as he since his engagement. Judith certainly has imbued him with some of her energy and spirit; for he has lost the lazy air that used to exasperate me so much, and is, beside, so desperately in love that I look upon Judith as a living exponent of the triumph of mind over matter.

Presently our pleasant *tête-à-tête* was broken up by a servant who came to announce that the President had taken the boat back to the "Despatch;" so we went rapidly down the hill to await our turn for transfer. Mr. Fairfax had

joined Barbara, and I could not forbear giving him a wickedly mischievous glance as we passed them, that I am quite certain he understood.

It took some time to get the whole party on board; but Mr. Fairfax had evidently determined to mould circumstances, for he declined to accept a seat in the barge, and assisted Barbara and me down into the launch instead. When we came on board the "Despatch" the collation was just being served, and the Count and Mr. Fairfax suggested that we should take ours on deck, in the little room that was evidently used for a card and smoking-room. Miss Endicott was sitting there as we came to the door, with a bevy of men around her; but she broke their ranks by insisting upon our joining her, and we had the very merriest luncheon imaginable, for she is the most thoroughly charming woman to her own sex that I ever met. You see I am quite of Kitty's opinion in this respect; Miss Endicott has made some very pleasant hours of my season.

The sail home was considerably more rapid than the coming down had been; and when we

landed on the wharf, Kitty found that her carriage had not come, and therefore proposed to ride up in ours, which Aunt Oglethorpe had sent down. I had, according to my resolution, carefully avoided a *tête-à-tête* with Mr. Fairfax all day, and consequently I felt like beating Barbara when she turned with a smile to him and asked him to take the other seat. I resolutely refused to meet his eyes; but with hardly an instant's hesitation he accepted, and we all drove off together.

It is a long ride from the Navy Yard up to K Street, and between my fatigue and my curious nervousness I did not feel in the least up to my usual form when I descended at Aunt Oglethorpe's door. I was hoping, devoutly, that Kitty would go straight on home; but, no! she had some mysterious errand with Aunt Oglethorpe which took her upstairs. I paused a moment on the doorstep before following her and Barbara, expecting Mr. Fairfax to say good-by; but that provoking Kitty turned back and said, —

"Mr. Fairfax, do wait for me in the library. I

am going past the club, and will set you down with great pleasure."

There was nothing left for me, of course, but to walk up to the library, and to feel, with an acuteness that I had never before experienced, that Alan Fairfax was coming behind me, with that half-masterful air of his that I had learned to recognize. As I seated myself on the sofa, he put a bunch of honeysuckle in my lap.

"I am afraid they are wilted," he said, "but you gave me no opportunity of giving them to you before. Do you not find the fragrance a little overpowering? To me the roses are more grateful." And he picked up one, a deep-hued Jacqueminot, from the bowl filled with them on the table at his elbow.

"That is a favorite of yours," said I, feeling that my ideas were leaving me rapidly, and that I was becoming common-place, if not idiotic. "What exquisite 'Jacks' those were which you sent me for the Legation ball!"

"I have one of those yet," he said softly, with a slight smile.

"Nonsense!" I cried, pulling myself together

desperately. "You have n't a particle of sentiment for faded flowers, — not a bit more than I have!"

"I cannot answer for yours," returned he, taking out his watch, and opening the back as he spoke; "but just to convince you, here is the rose I speak of."

"Oh, do let me see it!" said a child's voice, at that very instant; and to my horror, from underneath the sofa on which we sat, Donny Bellair's golden head emerged slowly; "*please* let me, Mr. Fairfax."

"Donny!" I gasped, "what are you doing here?"

"Waitin' for mamma," said he, calmly, as he advanced upon Mr. Fairfax and attempted to seize the watch. "Do let me see that rose, please. Why," with serene satisfaction, and nodding his head emphatically, "that 's just the same kind of rose that Aunt Dolly 's got in *her* locket; I saw it hangin' round her neck the other day."

If Alan Fairfax had looked at me, Laura, or even smiled as this dreadful child made his

startling revelation, I vow I would *never* have forgiven him! But with the utmost gravity he closed his watch, after allowing Donny to inspect the flower closely, and said politely, —

"Thank you, Donny. I have been looking for that other rose for some time; suppose you go and bring me the locket. It 's on your Aunt Dolly's dressing-table in her room."

Donny looked puzzled as he glanced at me. Then a sudden instinct seemed to inform him that he had best obey, and he ran out of the room, closing the door behind him with a resounding bang.

"Dolly," said Alan, softly, "will *you* give me the rose?"

And the tender ring of his voice told me that life's most dazzling sunshine had fallen upon my path, and that happiness joined hands with me across the red, red roses!

I regret to chronicle even here, however, that I behaved with great lack of dignity; for I cried, and then I laughed until I almost cried again, at the absurdity of Donny's appearance as a sort of *Deus ex machina*, and at last, just as I had

regained a somewhat April composure, Kitty appeared on the scene with a comical twinkle in her eye that convinced me Donny had betrayed us.

However, she spared me for the moment and took Alan off, saying that she knew I must be tired! — a malicious remark that not even his imploring glance induced me to revoke; so I went to find Barbara, feeling somewhat like the little old woman of nursery rhyme as I wondered "if this be I?"

Barbara was not in her room, nor in mine; and just as I was trying to resolve to leave the easy-chair into which I had sunk, and where I was indulging in erecting a lovely *château en Espagne* of my own, I heard the slight rustle of a gown in the doorway, and turned to meet Barbara's eyes as she crossed the threshold. What *had* happened to Barbara? This was not the pale, cold creature whom I had left on the staircase half an hour ago, but a lovely picture of bright, glowing womanhood, with the old, happy smile glinting up in her eyes.

"Barbara!" I cried, "oh, what

Harry come?" The least bit of shadow flitted over the gladness of her face, but a smile chased it rapidly away.

"Look!" she cried, throwing herself on her knees beside me, and thrusting some sheets of foreign note-paper into my hands. "You must share my joy as well as my grief, Dolly; read it."

"But I don't understand in the least," said I, as I saw a letter in Harry's well-known hand, beginning "My dear Judith." "How did you come by this, Barbara, and why do you look so happy?"

"Ah!" she cried, with a swift, impatient gesture, "I cannot wait for you to read, — I must tell you. It *is* written to Judith, but it 's all about me, — *me*, Dolly, — and he loves me with all his heart, and he heard some nonsense from that dreadful Hungarian woman about Arthur Harcourt and *you* — and that 's why he left me — and — "

"It 's a delight to me to hear *you* incoherent!" cried I, reduced to utter bewilderment; "but if you could disentangle yourself

sufficiently just to mention why Arthur's affection for me should send Harry flying off to Egypt—"

She interrupted me with a fresh burst. "Oh, Dolly, Dolly, he thought I was engaged to Arthur, don't you see? And, poor fellow! he is in such agony and worry about me—"

"Serves him quite right, my dear, though I don't 'see' yet as clearly as you evidently mean I shall," responded I. And then Barbara and I fell to kissing each other and talking both at once, and grew as delightfully ridiculous, pathetic, and amusing as two women will when the pressure of suspense is removed and they have leave from Fate for once to be happy.

It was such a relief, Laura, to find, upon reading Harry's letter to Judith, that the whole matter was so easy of solution. It only affords additional proof that jealousy will induce people to do almost anything. I had not the heart to revile Harry properly, for I am secretly so uneasy as to his safety among those treacherous Arabs; and, beside, who could throw a shadow over Barbara's joy?

As all this excitement occurred only last night, dear Laura, you will forgive some slight incoherency, and I must leave to your imagination the delight which my own individual happiness gave Barbara. I have not told a soul as yet, not even that treasure of a Judith; for Alan is coming to see Aunt Oglethorpe this evening, and I wish the dear aunt to have the pleasure of announcing my engagement to the Washington world. You must only promise me one thing in advance, and that is that you will not fail to come across whenever a certain ceremony takes place; for I don't think I should *feel married* without you to see the last of

Your very happy and loving,

DOLLY.

JUL 11 1941